

PLUCK AND LUCK

COMPLETE STORIES OF ADVENTURE.

HARRY E. WOLFF, PUBLISHER, 166 WEST 23D STREET, NEW YORK.

No. 1089.

NEW YORK, APRIL 16, 1919.

Price 6 Cents

BOY PARDS; OR, MAKING A HOME ON THE BORDER.

AND OTHER STORIES BY AN OLD SCOUT



He hastened to draw the canoe up. No sooner had he done this when suddenly from the forest along the river bank a score of Black Feet appeared. They closed in upon the young hunter.

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Issued Weekly—Subscription price, \$3.00 per year; Canada, \$3.50; Foreign, \$4.00. Harry E. Wolff, Publisher, 166 West 23d Street, New York, N. Y. Entered as Second-Class Matter, February 10, 1913, at the Post-Office at New York, N. Y., under the Act of March 3, 1879.

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BOY PARADS

—OR—

MAKING A HOME ON THE BORDER

By AN OLD SCOUT

CHAPTER I.

THE CLOUD APPEARS.

Deep in the forest wilds, where the panther and the bear, the beaver, and the otter for unknown centuries had held dominion, hardy spirits of a wild frontier had laid the nucleus of a town.

Scarce half a hundred brawny, rough-clad, but noble-hearted sons of the border had here cast their lot, and stood ready to dare the perils of a mighty untrodden wilderness.

The location was one more than ordinarily blessed by nature.

It was a point of land merging into picturesque bluffs upon a tributary of the Upper Missouri. In canoes and flat-boats these hardy pioneers with their families had left civilization and dearest ties behind, and had come hither to make a home on the border.

There are few living to-day who can comprehend what this meant in those primitive and early days. Summers of hard work and winters of long duration and privation.

Cabins had sprung up as by magic. The woodman's ax had done wonders, and even a substantial blockhouse with a high palisade stood upon the point.

This was to be the citadel or the place of refuge of all in the little settlement should it be attacked by Indians.

The region was infested with savage Blackfeet, who, upon the slightest provocation, would go upon the war-path.

The forests were full of wild and savage animals. All was wildness and primeval depths of forest, and the ring of the woodman's ax or the crack of his rifle made a thousand echoes in those solitudes.

Yet, in spite of its danger, there was a mighty charm in all this sort of life for the rough settlers.

It suited their hardy adventurous spirits, and not one of them would have exchanged his position with a New York millionaire.

The savage and warlike Blackfeet were many hundreds in number. The fighting men in the settlement numbered only fifty. Yet they were so expert in the use of the rifle, and such valorous fighters withal, that the savages did not often venture an attack.

While other border settlements were being ravaged, Fort Point, as the place was called, enjoyed comparative immunity.

We have described the settlement and its surroundings. Now let us introduce a few of the characters of this story.

Upon the day on which we open our story, gliding like a bird over the smooth bosom of Wild River, was a canoe which contained a single occupant.

This was a youth, dressed in buckskin garb after the manner of the pioneers, and armed with rifle and hunting-knife.

He was possessed of a slender, but well-knit frame, and pleasant features. He was but a boy in years, yet had a man's confidence of bearing and dignity of manner.

He was no other than young Allan True, the son of Col. Albion True, who was regarded as the leader at Fort Point. In all questions of war or of other matters, the people all turned to Col. True, whose word was law.

The colonel's family consisted, besides Allan, of his wife and two daughters, one Myrtle True, older than Allan, and Alice, a child of ten years.

Nothing on earth was so dear to the colonel as his family. Little Alice was his especial favorite.

Allan True, with whom our story will have more to deal than with the others, was a bright and plucky boy.

Not even among the old trappers could there be found a better rifle shot or a keener woodsman all around.

Allan had served in a good school and had won proficiency. He had been upon several war-like raids, and understood very well the art of fighting the Blackfeet.

In the bottom of his canoe there was a number of fine beaver pelts. He had been to visit his traps not a half dozen miles away, and had not met with luck.

Whistling merrily, Allan paddled his canoe along lightly. There was no thought of danger, for he was now almost under shadow of Fort True, as the palisade and block-house were called.

He paddled on until he reached a point just above the fort. Here he drove the canoe inshore.

A man was standing upon the bank overhead. He pounded the butt of his rifle on the ground and cried:

"Hello, Allan, been out to the traps, have ye?"

"Yes," replied Allan, tersely.

"Didn't see anything of Ingins, did ye?" asked the man who appeared to be a sort of woodsman himself.

"Indians!" exclaimed Allan, tersely. "I didn't see anything of them. But, then, I wasn't looking for them."

"Waal, that's good!" said the fellow, cheerily. "I'm glad to hear that. But you know I reckon thet there's a big game between the Blackfeet to take this town by surprise."

"Indeed?"

"It's a fact."

"I have heard that before."

"No doubt. But this time it is the truth," averred the man, firmly. "Old Black Thunder is on the war trail, an' by powderhorns, I'm tellin' ye he's in dead earnest."

Allan's face paled a trifle. He glanced toward the fort apprehensively, as a thought flashed through his mind of the awful fate of the dear ones there sheltered should the demon forces of the Blackfoot chief prevail. He drew a deep breath.

"Well, Beaver Bill," he said, slowly, "we won't borrow trouble until trouble comes. But have you good authority for what you say?"

The trapper drew closer to the lad, and his voice had an earnest thrill.

"Bill Hedges allus knows what he's talkin' about. I've been over the ridge an' I kin tell ye that Ingin sign is more plenty than thet of the coyote. Ye see, it's jest this a-way,

lad. They know of ther party of a hundred new settlers comin' up ther river on flat boats to jine us. Old Black Thunder is a powerful clever old varmint, an' he's goin' tew strike ther blow naow, while he thinks things are weak. We'll naterally be stronger when thet party jines us."

There was an anxious cloud upon Allan True's brow.

"Have you seen my father?" he asked.

"Not yet, lad. I'm jest off the train, an' happened tew see yew comin' ashore hyar. But here's evidence that I know what I am talkin' about."

The trapper made a gesture over his shoulder, and from the copse there instantly bounded a young Indian, straight and lithe and handsome in symmetry of form and contour of feature.

He wore the war-features of the Assiniboines, and the token of a chief, despite his extreme youth. There he stood, with folded arms, haughty brow, and curling, scornful lips before the two settlers.

"Little Arrow!" exclaimed Allan with a pleasant thrill in his voice. "I welcome you, my red brother!"

The boy chief's manner relaxed a trifle, and he shot a pleased glance at Allan.

"Little Arrow he glad to see white brother. The white trapper's words are straight. Leaves are upon the trees, stars are in the sky, but they are not more than the Blackfeet coming to fight the paleface. Little Arrow speaks."

Allan bowed slowly in acquiescence.

"Then we are sure of the help of your people, the Assiniboines?" he asked.

The boy chief made a dramatic gesture.

"Until the water dries up in the big river, until Gitche Manitou ceases to speak with his big voice in the sky, the Assiniboine will fight the Blackfeet."

From ages immemorial the Assiniboine and the Blackfoot had been sworn foes.

Both Allan and Beaver Bill therefore understood the young chief's words. The Assiniboines, however, were few in number in this locality, yet the white settlers were always able to count them in as allies.

"Little Arrow go back to his people," said the young chief. "He bring them to fort. Here they die with palefaces. Black Thunder will come within three days and three nights. Be ready."

"But won't you come to the fort first?" asked Allan.

But the Indian had waved his hand in adieu, and plunging in to the bushes, was gone from sight.

Allan True and the trapper gazed at each other.

"You can see that what I tell you is true, lad," said the woodsman, bluntly. "Thar's going to be a big ruction in this neighborhood, and not far off, either. Ugh! I dread it!"

Allan's face paled, but his manner was resolute. His hand gripped the stock of his rifle tightly, and he said:

"We must make preparations for the storm. Let us go to the fort and see my father at once."

"Kerrect, lad. I'm with ye!"

Allan picked up his pelts from the canoe, after drawing it up on the shore. He laid the beaver pelts down, and took hold of the gunwale of the canoe to draw it into a thick bunch of reeds, which would be a good hiding-place.

But as he did so he saw that which nigh paralyzed his nerves for the moment. The most poisonous reptile lying in that clump of grass could not have given him such a chill.

He stood for a moment in a state of awful fascination, with his gaze riveted full upon the outlines of the object. Dark, sinewy, snake-like it crouched there, with glittering eyes riveted full upon him, the most powerful specimen of a Blackfoot Indian Allan had ever seen.

In the savage's hands was his rifle, for the Blackfeet had just learned the use of gunpowder. Before Allan could move the hammer fell.

The whip-like report rang out, and Allan felt a burning sensation along his hip. He knew that the bullet had just grazed it. The Indian's aim had failed him.

Up from the reeds sprang the savage. But this time Allan was ready. The lad's rifle was on the bank above, but he whipped out his knife.

Had he been alone the question of life or death would have been a serious one to him.

But the trapper above had drawn a quick bead on the savage.

"Let up thar, yer red varmint!" he yelled. "Whoop-la! hyar's fer ther fust scalp in ther new Blackfoot war!"

A second report rang out. Beaver Bill's aim was deadly. The Blackfoot dropped in a heap. Down the bank sprang the trapper and dexterously lifted the savage's scalp.

"Hyar's number one!" he cried, holding the ghastly trophy aloft. "Thar's more tew foller on. By gunstacks, lad, this chap is one of ther big medicine chiefs of ther tribe! A close call fer yew!"

"You're right, Bill," agreed Allan, who had examined his hip to see that the wound was but a scratch.

But before further comment could be made by either, from the distant depths of the forest there came thrilling sounds. The crack of rifles and the wild whoop of Indians was plainly heard. Each looked at the other.

"What did I tell ye!" cried the trapper, excitedly. "That's some of our people in trouble, as sure as ye live. Come, lad, let's see what's up."

Allan needed no second bidding. He picked up his rifle and followed Beaver Bill into the forest.

CHAPTER II.

BOY PARDS.

It was easy for Beaver Bill and young Allan True to follow the sounds of the distant conflict. They were not far distant, and the trained hearing of each taught them that not many were engaged in strife.

Beaver Bill had mentally concluded that some three or four of the settlers, returning from a hunt, had been set upon by a band of Indians in ambush.

On they pressed through the undergrowth. The trapper skilfully located the position of the opposing parties, even at that distance, and a few minutes later a thrilling scene was brought to view.

Behind trees three white men were holding at bay half a score of the wily Blackfeet.

A desultory bush fight was in progress.

Beaver Bill gave a shout, and the three ambushed men gave a cheer.

This had a demoralizing effect upon the savages.

They evidently conceived the idea that reinforcements had arrived, and not knowing the number, caution, the predominant trait of the Indian nature, had caused them to abandon the fight.

In three minutes the battle was over, the savages having vanished deeper into the forest.

Beaver Bill and Allan stood face to face with the three men whom they had thus rescued from what might have been the death of perhaps all.

All three were dressed in buckskin, one tall and strong framed, with a heavy beard, the second short and stout with a smooth face, and the third a youth of Allan's age and much of his build.

The tall man with the beard threw down his rifle, and thrusting forth his right hand cried in a hearty voice:

"Waal, I swow! if it ain't Beaver Bill Hedges. I'm durned glad ter see yew, pard!"

"Kit Carson, as I'm a livin' sinner!" cried Beaver Bill, with wild transport of joy. "What has brought yew inter ther Nor'west?"

The distinguished trapper, scout and plainsman, Kit Carson, it was who stood before the wondering gaze of Beaver Bill and Allan True. All over the United States his name was a household word.

Allan, who had never seen the famous Indian fighter before, gazed upon him with something akin to awe. Mentally the lad admitted to himself that he had never seen a finer built, more sinewy and splendid specimen of muscular manhood in his life. The youth's admiration was instantly aroused.

Introductions were in order. The man and youth were introduced as father and son—David Mains, of Kentucky, and Harry Mains, his son.

Kit Carson explained that he had agreed to pilot a large party of settlers to Fort Point, and that they were now fifty miles down the river on flat-boats. David Mains was the leader of the party, and having arrived so near their destination, he had, with Kit Carson and Harry, his son, yielded to an impulse to push ahead on shore and apprise the Fort Pointers of the coming of the addition to the population of the little border town.

"Indeed, ye'll find a hearty welcome at Fort Point, I reckon!" cried Beaver Bill. "I reckon Colonel True has bin lookin' for ye a long time, eh, Allan?"

"He has indeed!" replied Allan. "My father will be very glad to welcome newcomers!"

"Is it true, then, Bill, that the Blackfeet are on the rampage again?" asked Kit Carson.

"Yew bet they are," replied the trapper. "Their chief, Black Thunder, is a-makin' things howl. If ever I kin draw a bead on ther varmint, I reckon he'll make all his howlin' t'other side of Jordan. Kit, I'm dog-dashed glad tew hev yew up hyar fer a while. Thar's a big buffalo hunt on fer ter-morrer, an' we must be counted in fer it. There's likely tew be hot times with ther reds hyarabouts."

Kit Carson smiled at his confrere's earnestness.

"Then you think I'll find plenty of fun up in these yer parts, do ye, pard?"

"I'll bet yew will, Kit."

"By all means stay, Mr. Carson," said David Mains. "You'll want to see our people settled down and partake of our hospitality at least before you return."

"Rest easy, friends," said Kit, with a laugh. "I'm goin' to roost a while with ye in the mighty Nor'west, an', Bill, I kin tell yew that I'm counted in on ther buffalo hunt. Now, let's go on up tew ther fort an' see ther kernel."

This settled the matter at once.

The three men went on ahead with long, loping strides, chatting the while.

Harry Mains and Allan True followed on behind, completely engrossed with each other.

The two lads had almost instantly formed a deep liking for each other. The section in Kentucky from which Harry had come had once been the dark and bloody ground where Boone and Wetzler fought the Shawnees.

But civilization had claimed that territory forever, and the wild Northwest now presented to adventurous Harry Mains just the field for adventure his spirit craved.

It required but a brief while for the two lads to learn that their tastes were inimical, and the foundation of a deep and lasting friendship was at once formed.

Bright and happy was the conversation of the two lads.

"You'll like it up here first rate, Harry," said Allan, warmly. "We'll have lots of good times together. We must take in that buffalo hunt to-morrow."

"Oh, that'll be jolly!" cried Harry, with sparkling eyes. "Do you know, Allan, I've taken a great liking to you?"

"It is a mutual thing," replied Allan. "And as you and I are the only two young fellows of an age at the fort, why can we not be pards?"

"Do you mean it?"

"I do!"

They gripped hands.

"It is settled. From this on we are pards, whether at home, in the chase, or fighting the Indians!"

"Yes."

The boy pards, as we may safely call them, continued in this strain until the fort was reached.

Harry told the story of the long and perilous trip up the Missouri, and spoke kindly and affectionately of his mother, who was now with the party on the flatboats.

He listened with interest to Allan's eulogistic praise of Fort Point as a place of settlement.

Quite a sensation was created in the little border settlement by the arrival of the advance guard of the new colonists.

Kit Carson was regarded with awe by most of the frontier people who were conversant with his fame. Colonel True, a tall, stately man of polished manners and military bearing, welcomed them to the fort.

He talked long and interestedly with Mr. Mains and Kit Carson upon the subject of the future of Fort Point.

And the newcomers were agreed that his reasoning that it was the best of the border settlements was correct.

Already a large fur trade was being carried on which yielded quite a revenue. Agricultural lands were being opened up gradually. The region furnished plenty of means for livelihood. Truly the future looked glorious.

There was but one dark cloud.

The Blackfeet were warlike and treacherous. They swarmed in great numbers through the forest, making it extremely dangerous to travel far from the settlement.

"Indeed, at this moment," said Colonel True, "I fear that a war with them is impending. They will not be pacified. Naturally they look upon us as invaders of their hunting grounds. It is useless to treat with them!"

"That is kerrect!" declared Beaver Bill, emphatically. "Thar ain't no other way but tew hev a fight with them!"

Kit Carson smiled grimly.

"I am going ter abide a while here with yer, colonel!" he said. "I think mebbe we kin teach ther varmints a bit of a lesson afore we git through!"

The colonel expressed his delight, and offered to put Kit in command of the fort. But the famous backwoodsman declined.

The newcomers were shown about the town. In most respects it did not greatly differ from the ordinary frontier settlement.

But a number of the Assiniboines driven before the victorious Blackfeet had come in and pitched their teepees in the outskirts of the town. They were disposed to be honest and friendly, and were considered as faithful allies.

It was near the close of day, and the smell of venison being prepared for the evening meal came tantalizingly to the nostrils of the party.

"You shall all dine with me!" said Colonel True. "To-morrow we have a buffalo hunt in which you must participate."

"But it will be safe ter leave ther fort fer the hunt?" asked Kit Carson.

"Only a dozen or more of us are going on the hunt," replied the colonel. "There will be enough to defend the settlement!"

The colonel's cozy little home was invaded. Mrs. True, a fine, matronly lady, received the visitors. Allan and Harry were already there.

Myrtle True and little Alice were introduced to Harry, and the rare beauty and gentleness of manner of Myrtle made an impression upon the boyish soul of young Mains.

Never in his life, he secretly thought, had he met one of the opposite sex so charming and whom he liked so well.

And Myrtle, on the other hand, was instinctively attracted toward the tall, handsome young woodsman. In her eyes he instantly became the ideal of all that was noble and true. It needed not the tell-tale blush upon her cheeks to apprise Harry of the fact that she liked him.

The evening meal at Colonel True's was most enjoyable.

Kit Carson, though in the woods a rough man, was in company most polite and entertaining. Time passed most enjoyably until the meal was half done.

Then an incident occurred to at once dispel all happiness and thoughts of lightness. An old Assiniboine chief, Black Dog, suddenly appeared in the doorway.

"White man go quick!" he cried in his broken English. "Heap Blackfeet down ribber, fight paleface, break canoe, kill quick."

In an instant all were upon their feet. The report was quickly substantiated that the Blackfeet had attacked a party of hunters a short distance down the river, and having them hemmed in on all sides, were likely to annihilate them.

In a few moments a party of relief was organized. Beaver Bill and Kit Carson were at the head of them.

"By bufflers, let's give the sarpints a right good lesson this time!" cried Beaver, excitedly. "They're drawing the lines closer every day, and we need ter give 'em a red hot lesson."

This sentiment was responded to with cheers.

Only a score of the fighting men were allowed to go. Colonel True and the others remained at home to guard the fort against attack.

But fully a hundred of the Assiniboines came out in war paint and joined the settlers. This made quite a large force.

As was usual in such cases, the women and children were called into the fort to pass the night. Darkness had settled down thick and impenetrable.

What of the boy pards?

Were they content to remain behind as defenders of the fort? Not they! It was too good an opportunity altogether for them to have a bit of daring adventure.

In the very van of the relief party were the two adventurous youths. Into the forest they boldly plunged.

And before a mile had been covered the distant sounds of conflict were plainly heard.

On pushed the relief party, until a sudden blazing line of fire leaped from the woods in front of them.

CHAPTER III.

THE BUFFALO HUNT—KIDNAPED.

At a glance the purpose of the wily savages was seen.

They had become apprised of the approach of the foe, and to head them off the woods were fired.

Up into the murky night air sprang columns of flame.

Along the ground through the underbrush with race-horse speed it ran.

A powerful night wind was sweeping it straight down upon the relief party. In a moment their position was rendered one of most awful peril.

The flames mounted seemingly to the zenith. To attempt to pass through them was madness. To retreat before them was to yield the field to the red foe.

What was to be done?

There was no doubt but at every moment the savages were drawing closer lines about the beleaguered paleface hunters, who were holding off till the last and waiting and hoping for the relief.

Words fail to adequately describe the situation in its entirety.

But in this dire extremity there suddenly rose above the roar of the flames the clarion voice of Kit Carson.

"Boys, strike this way! By thunder, we'll fool 'em yet! Follow me, every mother's son of ye!"

With a cheer, the relief party surged in that direction. This was straight toward the river. Here there was a strip of land one hundred yards in width which was clear.

But here the savages had entrenched themselves behind some fallen trees and rocks, and as the party appeared, opened fire upon them. One moment the relief party wavered.

A few of the Assiniboinés had fallen. Two of the settlers were wounded. The light of the flames made all as day. Kit Carson's eagle eye saw the exigency, and his daring spirit acted.

"Charge ther varmints!" he yelled.

Foremost of them all, the brave plainsman led the relief party across that open space. The Blackfeet, terrified at the onslaught so daring, and fearful of a close encounter, broke and fled.

It was a fatal move for them. After them, in wild haste, came the avenging Assiniboinés. Tomahawks and scalping knife were freely used upon the Blackfeet foe.

It was a complete and sweeping victory for the Fort Pointers. The beleaguered hunters had been six in number. Only two survived, but these had long held the foe at bay from their position behind a circle of piled up boulders. The battle was over and the victory declared for the settlers.

The march back to the fort was both a triumphant and a sorrowful one.

Four of the settlers had fallen beneath the Blackfeet's aim and left sorrowing families behind. They were buried in the early morning just under the shadow of the fort, and there was plenty of sympathy and cheer for the bereaved ones.

But there was good reason for triumphant feelings on account of the result of the battle.

"Yew kin depend upon it thet ther varmints won't hang around hyar much fer some time ter come!" declared Kit Carson, confidently. "It'll make 'em smart fer erwhile, you bet."

"Then we can go upon the buffalo hunt with safety," said Colonel True, joyfully; "that is the best of news. We should fetch in by night several hundred good hams for curing. With plenty of provisions we can stand the winter well."

Accordingly, with the first dawn of day arrangements were made for the big buffalo hunt.

Scouts were sent everywhere through the woods and over the country, and returned with the cheering intelligence that the Blackfeet had retired beyond the upper river.

But an Assiniboiné runner brought the news that the Blackfeet were massing their forces for a concerted attempt to sweep the settlement forever from the face of the earth. "But that will not come for several days," said Colonel True. "Now for the hunt!"

The sun had just appeared above the horizon when a score of armed and mounted hunters rode out of the fort yard.

Among them, eager for the fun, were the boy parads, Harry and Allan.

As was natural, their youthful souls were fired with the delightful prospect before them.

The hunting party left the fort with the cheers of those left behind. Through the forest for some miles they threaded their way, until at length they came to the plains, which extended as far as the eye could reach for many miles.

Here the rich, succulent grass made tempting food for the buffalo which in great herds roamed over the waste.

It was now in order to sight a herd of the animals.

The party split up into sections of three or four.

In one were the boy parads, Mr. Mains and Kit Carson.

Suddenly, as they topped a little roll in the prairie, Allan True pulled up his horse and shouted:

"Here they are!"

Away in the distance was visible a dark, moving body.

Experienced eyes would at once recognize the buffalo.

Signs were made to the others of the party, and then the drive was begun.

First, half of the party went on a circuitous route to come up behind the buffalo and start them. It was designed to drive them toward a timber belt five miles away, and there corral them, and in the melee shoot as many as possible. The scheme worked well.

The sight of the mighty body of buffalo thundering down across the plain was truly a grand one. The boy parads sat upon their horses with flushed faces.

Suddenly there was a split, and a hundred or more of the buffalo came thundering by the party.

"After them, parads!" cried Kit Carson.

This was enough.

"Come on, Harry!"

"All right, Allan."

After the hunted animals went the hunters. Now they were close upon their heels.

Crack!

Kit Carson's rifle spoke, and one of the herd fell. Mr. Mains brought down another. Harry fired and dropped one of the brutes.

But Allan's horse became unmanageable and dashed right among the herd. In a moment his awful danger of being unhorsed and trampled to death was seen by the others.

He was right in the midst of the maddened herd. Now a big buffalo bull surged against his horse and sent the animal plunging into the air.

Kit Carson on one side and Mr. Mains on the other were riding furiously to try and split the herd and save the imperiled boy. Mr. Mains shielded his mouth with his left hand and shouted:

"Keep steady, lad! We will try and split them!"

Kit Carson in another moment had broken the line. But at that moment Allan's horse fell. For a moment a shuddering cry went up, and the boy was seen rolling in the dust. Then the herd was past, and he was seen scrambling to his feet.

He was bruised and weakened, but not badly hurt. Kit Carson caught his horse and brought it back to him.

Allan mounted and sat for a moment in an effort to catch his breath. Kit was anxiously questioning him. The others had swept on. Not fifty feet distant lay the carcass of a big buffalo.

"Are ye sure ye ain't badly hurt, lad?" asked the trapper, anxiously. "I fear ye've broken some bones."

"I'm all right, thank you," replied Allan. "I ought to have known better than to have let Firefly get away with me."

The two sat upon their horses watching the scene for a moment. It was a thrilling sight.

Everywhere the buffaloes were making a mad race, and everywhere the hunters were relentlessly pursuing them. Dozens were shot, and the outlook was fine for a big supply of the buffalo meat.

"Ther hunt is a big success, lad!" cried Kit. "I reckon it'll be a big haul."

But Allan's blood was once more fired, and he was about to be off with the other hunters when suddenly a distant object on the plain caught his gaze.

"My heavens, what is that?" he cried, pointing over the plain. "It is a messenger from the fort!"

Kit Carson gave an exclamation of surprise and alarm. Across the plain a man was riding a foam-flecked horse, spurring and whipping hard. Straight up to the two watchers he dashed, and the steed in the last plunge fell exhausted. The rider, a buckskin clad backwoodsman, picked himself up and cried hoarsely:

"My heavens, come back to the fort, every one of ye! Where is Colonel True?"

"Thunder and guns!" gasped Kit Carson, "hev the varmints attacked the fort again?"

"For heaven's sake, tell us what is the matter!" cried Allan, with rigid pallor.

The fellow hesitated as he glanced at the lad's white face.

"I—I don't like to tell ye," he said.

Allan dropped from his horse.

"Speak!" he gritted, seizing the other's arm.

"Waal," said the settler, slowly, "it's bad news. A sneaking coyote of a Blackfoot has kidnaped your little sister

Alice. Keep up, lad, for we'll rescue her or die in ther attempt."

A hoarse, awful cry broke from Allan's pallid lips—a cry of horror and despair.

CHAPTER IV.

ON THE TRAIL.

The awful declaration of the courier from the fort that his little sister, Alice, had been stolen away by the Blackfeet, for a moment caused Allan True to nigh yield to suffocation.

"Bear up, boy!" cried Kit Carson, springing to his side and supporting him. "It's hard, but by ther great beavers we'll raise heaven and earth ter save ther leetle one."

"Call father!" said Allan, huskily. "Where is Harry? We must go back at once. No more hunting. How did it happen, Digby?"

The settler had doffed his coonskin cap, and said:

"We didn't reckon on a Blackfoot being within ten miles. Waal, thar children war all playin' thar, my girl with ther rest, when out of ther reeds jumps a Blackfoot, grabs up yer little sister Alice, leaps inter a canoe, and pulls across ther river. Ther last seen of ther cuss he war strikin' inter ther woods, with little Alice faintin' in his arms."

"Oh, my heavens!" cried Allan, wildly. "We must be to the rescue. Call to my father, Harry."

Up to the spot rode Colonel True at that moment.

The rest of the party were quickly on hand. The awful tidings caused all thought of pursuing the buffalo hunt further to be abandoned.

Colonel True was nearly prostrated with the awful news. With white, set face and stern voice he said:

"I want twenty brave men to go with me to the rescue of my child."

"All that are here will go!" cried Kit Carson.

"Ay, that we will!" shouted the brave backwoodsmen, cheerily.

The bereaved parent's face brightened.

A couple of brave men remained to take care of the buffalo meat, which could not very well be left to spoil upon the plain. Then the others, with Colonel True at their head, rode away furiously for the fort.

The boy parads, Harry and Allan, rode side by side. Harry spoke a few words of a comforting sort to Allan.

"We will never give up until we have rescued Alice," said Harry, firmly. "And, heaven helping us, we will succeed, Allan."

"If the brutes do her no harm I think there is a chance," said Allan, hopefully.

"I hardly think they will. Their game, no doubt, is to steal her away and count upon working upon your father's feelings to such an extent that he will give a large ransom for her return."

"I only ask for strength to get to the fort and give my mother cheer," said Allan.

On rode the frontiersmen. Faster and faster until the foam in white ridges rolled from the flanks of the galloping horses. Truly that was a hard ride.

But now the edge of the plain was reached. They were in the dense forest, and every sinew was strained.

The path in the forest was at times narrow and not easy to follow. There were brief delays at fords, or where trees had fallen, involving a detour.

But at length the trees grew thinner, and the light beyond showed that the open was near at hand.

A moment later and the settlement and the fort burst into view. It was now only a short gallop to finish the course.

Up to the stockade the party dashed.

Colonel True threw himself from his horse. There was an agonized crowd of women and children, and from among hem two came rushing to his arms.

These were his wife and his daughter, beautiful Myrtle True.

"Oh, my husband!" wailed the afflicted mother. "What shall we do? Must we lose our Alice?"

The colonel's tall form quivered like an aspen.

"No!" he cried, in a voice of thunder. "Not if we have to scour the plains from here to the Rockies; not if we have to hunt down every Blackfoot in the northwest. Woe to them if they dare to harm our darling!"

Preparations were quickly made for the expedition of res-

cue. Armed men were upon hand, and a plan of action was quickly determined upon.

In the midst of the excitement the tall form of Kit Carson passed through the crowd. He doffed his coonskin cap and, walking up to Mrs. True, took her hand in his.

"Madam," he said, respectfully and earnestly, "I ain't much of a speechifier, nor of a ladies' man, an' if ye'll excuse my roughness I mought say that I am sorry for you; very sorry I am, an' by the hookies, if there's such a thing possible on earth, I'll fetch yer leetle gal back to ye safe an' well. Don't have any fears on that score."

"I thank you, sir," replied the weeping woman. "I am assured of your sincerity."

"Well, Kit," said David Mains, a short while later, "what course are you going to take?"

"I've made it up, all right," replied the old trapper, readily; "that lad yonder," indicating Allan, "and myself are goin' ter go by ther river in a canoe. We'll meet the rest of ye at the forks, six miles below yer."

So it was decided. Allan was only too well pleased to go with Kit. The others were to take the trail through the woods on foot.

In this manner it was hoped to intercept the savage abductor at the forks of the river six miles below. At that point Kit Carson and Allan were to meet the rest of the party.

The searching party under the leadership of Colonel True crossed the river. Harry Mains remained at home with a brave band to defend the fort in case of an attack. Kit and Allan entered the canoe and drifted down the river past the fort.

But the day was fast drawing to a close. The sun had just passed beyond the western horizon, and the shadows were fast deepening over river and forest and hill and plain.

"Well, lad," said Kit Carson, as the light canoe was swiftly driven along, "I reckon thar's sharp work ahead fer us. But if ye keep a steady hand an' stick close by me, an' don't do anything rash I reckon we'll be all right."

"I shall follow your directions very closely, sir," said Allan, sincerely.

"I reckon ye've had a bit of experience on the trail afore now?"

"Yes, sir, I have."

"Waal, I'll risk ye, then."

Nothing more was said for a time. The shadows of night had settled down quickly now.

Overhead the stars were gleaming brightly in the blue ether. As the canoe glided on like a feather over the river's current Kit at times studied the firmament above.

The canoe now reached a part of the river where the current was swift and where it did not become necessary to paddle, but simply to hold the craft steady.

The old trapper gazed upward for some moments, and then in a ruminating way, said:

"It's powerful queer about all them little stars up there. They do say as how they're worlds just like this one. Durned if it don't make a man feel his insignificance pooty quick, eh, lad?"

"It does, indeed," agreed Allan. "We are but mites in this big space."

"Kerrect, lad! I've done a powerful heap of thinking on thet thing, an' I kain't make it out at all. I reckon you've been tew skule an' know a thing or two. Kin you tell whether thar air people like us up in them thar stars?"

"That is not known," replied Allan. "Some scientists have tried to establish the fact that there are inhabitants upon the moon, but others claim that there is no atmosphere there to keep them alive."

The trapper shook his head slowly.

"It's my 'pinyun thar's a heap of stuff fer people on this earth tew learn yit," he said. "Ther more I think of it, ther more I wonder why ther Almighty is so powerful lenient to us all. Waal, now, jes' think of ther man who has got ther grit ter stand up an' cuss God. Whew! He don't know what he's doin'. An' then, thar's ther pizen Injun we're chasin' now. What'll ther Almighty hev ter say tew him? It's too big a kernundrum fer old Kit tew cogitate over. Eh, lad, what's that?"

In an instant the trapper's philosophy was dispelled by the force of a new and practical exigency. He dropped his paddle and gripped his rifle.

Just at that moment there had come from shore a quick flash, a ringing report, and Allan heard the deadly sound of the bullet as it passed over his head.

Quick was the old trapper to act though. Up he sprang, and—

Crack!

His own rifle spoke spitefully. His keen eyes had followed the flash of the foe's rifle instantly and the aim was deadly.

There was a wild, despairing yell, and a dark body came tumbling down the bank and fell with a splash into the water.

"You caught him!" exclaimed Allan in a whisper. "Are there others there?"

"It's durned hard tew tell, lad," declared the old scout. "We better vamoose, I'm thinkin'. Let me have ther paddle."

Dropping his rifle, Kit seized the paddle. With quick stroke he sent the canoe across the river and into the shadows of the opposite bank.

Along the shore the canoe glided. A fallen tree hung over the water. Under the thick branches the canoe glided, and there it remained, the two occupants keeping it in place by holding on to the branches.

The move had not been made any too soon.

The consequences which would have overtaken them had they kept on down the stream were now made plain.

For a light flashed for a moment against the opposite bank and just below.

Then shadowy forms were seen.

Allan breathlessly noted this.

"Injuns, by thunder, an' a hull gang of them!" muttered Kit Carson. "I reckon we've a bad showing, my lad. It's lucky fer us that we got out of ther clear space in ther river in time."

"You are right," agreed Allan. "But is not our position dangerous here?"

"Tain't nuthin' else. But I don't see what we kin do better than ter stay yer. If they try to root us out we must fight, thet's all."

"I am ready!" said Allan, as he placed fresh caps on the piddle of his rifle.

Plainly the shadowy forms of the savages could be seen. It was evident that they were looking for the meaning of the rifle shots.

Then a hoarse yell was evidence that they had found the dead body of their comrade. In that moment they disappeared.

Kit Carson had been nervously fingering the lock of his rifle.

"Wagh! wouldn't I just have liked to give them critters a couple of shots!" he muttered. "But it would hev been foolish, I reckon, fer they would hev located us at once."

"Yes," said Allan. "It would have been a fatal move for us."

"Now look out fer mischief," averred the old trapper.

"But they have gone."

"Don't ye be too sure!" chuckled the scout. "Wait a bit. When ther pizen sarpints are ther quietest then is ther time ter fear them most."

Stillness most intense was upon the forest now. The great river in its sluggish course made little ripple or sound.

Occasionally through the forest there came the shrill note of a nightbird, or the distant howl of a coyote.

Anxiously the two white trailers under the fallen tree awaited developments. They were not long in coming.

Suddenly Kit clutched Allan's arm.

"Look thar!" he whispered. "What did I tell ye?"

Several round, black objects seemed bobbing up and down on the surface of the river and nearing the fallen tree.

CHAPTER V.

CLEVER WOODCRAFT.

It required no study whatever upon Kit Carson's part to understand exactly the nature of the curious black objects on the river surface.

He knew that at least a dozen of the wily savages were swimming for the shore and that these were their heads.

The Indian swims dog fashion with his body much under water, and this was the reason that only the heads were visible.

Breathlessly the two watchers remained in the canoe under the fallen tree. Steadily nearer drew the round black objects.

"Waal, I swow!" muttered Kit Carson. "I believe they're makin' directly for this spot."

And so indeed it seemed. Nearer every moment they drew. The two watchers began to grow nervous.

Kit Carson drew a deep breath. He leaned over the gunwale of the canoe and whispered hoarsely:

"Hold on tew the branches, boyee. Keep the canoe stiddy."

Allan with tingling veins complied. The moments passed. The gentle splash of the swimmers could now be heard as they momentarily drew nearer.

The old scout's right hand gripped the handle of his hunting knife. Now one of the savages reached the shore and crawled out upon the sands.

Another followed. Silently, like shadows, they gathered there. Then the critical moment which Kit Carson had feared came.

One of the swimming Indians had probably conceived the possibility of the fugitives being in hiding under the branches of the fallen tree. He swam cautiously up to it and thrust his ugly visage through the foliage.

The darkness under the tree was for a moment too great. When the Blackfoot's vision did clear sufficiently for him to see objects there it was too late.

For a long arm was thrust forward, sinewy fingers clutched the savage's throat, and his head went under water.

There it stayed until the deadly knife twice went to the hilt in his back in the region over the heart. Held under water as he was the doomed savage could not struggle.

He was obliged to succumb, and the waters reddened with the life current presently, swirling carried the body down beneath the surface.

All had been done so quickly and so silently that the savage's companions on the shore had not dreamed of such a thing.

Allan drew a deep breath and hung on resolutely to the branches.

But the savages never dreamed of the proximity of their foes. However, an incident at that moment increased the peril of the two fugitives.

It was suddenly evident that they missed one of their number. They appeared to scrutinize the face of the river, and several nightbird screams were given as a signal.

But they were not answered. Finally one of the savages swam out into the river. Upon his return he caught sight of the fallen tree and swam toward it.

In that moment Kit Carson knew that the jig was up. Their hiding place was sure to be discovered.

The savage swam quickly toward the foliage. His companions watched him. Just as he reached the tree he gave the guttural call of the frog. Then his dusky visage was thrust through the foliage.

Unlucky redskin! Talon fingers clutched his windpipe. There was a silent splash as he vanished beneath the surface.

Then once more the current was reddened with blood, and the undertow took down another corpse. Kit drew a deep breath. The perspiration was rolling in great streams from his brow.

"Jericho!" he whispered to Allan. "I'm mighty afeerd we're in a bad scrape, lad. Hold on tight."

Allan said nothing, but he realized fully what this meant. Life hung in the balance, and he was not slow to grasp the exigency. Yet he did not lose courage.

The other savages stood like statues on the bank above.

Presently one of them imitated the note of a screech owl. But no reply was accorded him.

Then there were guttural exclamations. The savages suspected something wrong, and were advancing toward the fallen tree.

The trapper knew that quick action must be made. Hesitation meant death. A novel expedient came to him.

He knew that to remain where they were would be to court certain death. To drift out into the river again was equivalent to the same.

So he leaned forward and whispered to Allan:

"Boyee, I've got tew leave you here. But don't get frightened. Stay hyar until ther coast is clear. Then paddle down tew ther forks, and I'll meet you thar."

Then before Allan could make any protest, the trapper dove into the foliage, and in an instant was upon the shore. Straight into the midst of the savages he discharged his rifle, then he sprang into the forest.

So taken by surprise were the Blackfeet that for a moment they could not act.

When they recovered their white foe was deep in the forest. However, with wild yells, they started after him.

But Kit Carson was as swift and wily as a fox, and led his enemies a long and hard chase through the wilds. Finally he succeeded, as he believed, in giving them the slip altogether.

But he was deep in the heart of the forest. However, it was the same forest through which it was believed that little Alice's abductor had taken his way.

So it occurred to Kit that possibly he might run across the wretch, or at least strike his trail. He finally came into a well beaten deer path, which he followed for a long way.

Several hours passed.

Then suddenly the trapper became conscious of a thrilling fact.

He was being followed.

It was a peculiar kind of an instinct which taught him this. The ordinary man would never have suspected the fact, but the trained senses of the scout detected it.

"That is queer," he muttered. "Wagh! I'll give that red his last medicine. He'd oughter hev better sense."

With a chuckle, Kit suddenly dropped flat behind a tree.

There he lay for several minutes like a log. Suddenly his waiting was rewarded by a verification of his belief.

He felt some one near him. He drew his knife and held the blade between his teeth. He waited with all due patience some while longer.

Then suddenly there was a swift, rushing sound, and a sinewy body was upon him. Had he been unsteady, that moment would have been the scout's last.

But just in that flash of time he saw the uplifted arm and the gleaming tomahawk. Then he caught the foe's wrist in his iron grasp, and was instantly in the other's embrace.

That would certainly have been the savage's death knell had it not been for the war-whoop which pealed from his lips.

That whoop was the saving of his life. Kit Carson instantly relaxed his grip and hurled his antagonist from him, shouting:

"Assiniboine—friend of the paleface!"

In an instant he recognized the war cry of the Assiniboine. The savage threw down his tomahawk, and in broken English cried:

"Gitche Manitou has forbidden it. You paleface? Me no know it. We friends. Forgive Assiniboine, he no know."

"That's all right, Injun!" cried the white trapper, heartily. "Only that yell saved your life. Why, upon my word, if it ain't ther boy chief, Little Arrow!"

"The gerat white hunter!" gasped the Indian lad. "Me lucky no kill you. You no kill me. We friends."

"Of course!" roared Kit Carson. "What did you think I was?"

"Me trail Blackfoot, me think. Trail must hab cross. Look for Injun what steals white girl. See?"

"I see," cried Kit. "Well, my boy, I'm on ther same hooks. I reckon we kin work together. Yew say that yew have got the trail of that red that stole little Alice?"

"I say that, paleface," affirmed the boy chief. "Little Arrow speak true. Never lie!"

"I believe you," said the trapper. "Well, we will lose no time hyar. Let's keep right on."

"Ah, paleface forget. No keep trail in dark. Neber see it. Wait till daylight."

"Is that what yew war doing?"

"Yes."

The scout did not relish the idea. He knew that Little Arrow had meant to sleep on the trail that night and follow it next day.

"Oh, life is too short fer that!" declared the trapper. "We hev got to go right along to find that gal; hear me? We'll trust to luck. Thar's a bigger party in ther woods here somewhere, I reckon."

Little Arrow nodded his head.

"They have gone on," he declared. "Heap big hurry. Neber mind Blackfoot. He fool 'em."

"We'll see about that," muttered Kit, grimly.

So it was decided, and the plans of the white trapper prevailed. All that night they pushed on through the woods.

Daylight came and brought with it a startling surprise. Passing through a copse, Little Arrow recoiled.

"Wait, paleface!" he whispered. "Blackfoot down here. See?"

Leaning against a stump in a sitting posture sure enough not twenty feet distant was a Blackfoot Indian. Kit Carson was about to draw a bead on him when the young Assiniboine put a hand on his arm.

"Wait!" he said, briefly. "He no do us harm. He dead Injun!"

"Dead!" gasped Kit, in astonishment.

"Yes, me show you!"

Little Arrow bounded forward and pushed against the Blackfoot's shoulder. His words were proven true.

It was a corpse leaning against the stump. It rolled over, and then Kit saw the tell-tale bullet wound in his temple.

"Jupiter an' little fishes!" he gasped. "Sculp me fer a painter if he ain' really a dead Injun! I'd sure hev wasted a bullet on him in another minnit."

Little Arrow had bent down and was scrutinizing the dead savage's face.

"Well, boyee," exclaimed Kit, "what's the matter?"

The boy chief made a curious sign.

"Paleface listen," he said. "Injun am de berry one dat steal little white girl."

"What!" roared Kit.

"See!"

The Indian youth pointed to some footprints in the soft soil. Kit Carson was given an electric thrill.

They were child's footprints.

"Great heavens!" he gasped. "Ye're dead right, Little Arrow. But whar is the liddle gal?"

The eyes of each followed the tiny footprints to where they were lost in the bushes. Then a startling sound reached their ears.

It was a distant, peculiar, wild shriek. It went in tremolo notes, quivering, quavering through the treetops. The Indian youth gave a quick spring forward.

CHAPTER VI.

FOUND AT LAST.

Left to himself in the canoe under the fallen tree, Allan True was for a time wholly undecided how to act.

He appreciated the generous scheme of Kit Carson to save his life and risk his own by drawing the pursuit of the savages into the forest.

In a very short time he was well assured that the coast was clear, and that it would be safe for him to emerge from his concealment.

There was apparently not an Indian in the neighborhood, and so, after a few minutes of careful thought, Allan let go of the branches and the canoe drifted out into the stream.

For a few minutes the canoe swirled along in the sluggish current, while Allan sat erect, with every nerve tense and upon the qui vive.

Upon the opposite bank once he fancied he saw forms moving. But a closer scrutiny betrayed these as antelopes come down to water.

He remembered the directions given him by the trapper, Kit Carson, to proceed down the river alone to the forks and meet the others there.

So seizing the paddle Allan sent the canoe along swiftly.

Down the current the light craft swiftly sped. The young trailer was careful to keep in the shadows, and in this way the miles were past.

Something like an hour passed.

Allan reckoned that he was not far from the forks when he suddenly received a startling surprise.

In the distance through the dark forest he caught sight of a star light. It glimmered brightly, and an ejaculation escaped the young hunter's lips.

"A campfire!"

Allan was positive that this was the light of a camp. Instantly the thought occurred to him that this might be the night camp of the abductor of little Alice.

Allan was thrilled beyond description and sat for a moment in the canoe undecided how to act.

In that moment he felt the need of advice and wished heartily that Kit was yet with him.

"Pshaw!" he muttered finally. "Be a man, Allan True. There is but one course for you to pursue, and that is to find out the meaning of that blaze."

With this resolution that boy hunter ran his canoe on to the sands.

He leaped out and drew the light craft up into a clump of reeds. Then he mounted the bank and set out in the direction of the light.

Allan's experience with woodcraft was not so very ex-

tended, yet he felt sure that he could manage to approach the camp without warning its occupants.

Carefully he crept forward through the underbrush. Nearer he drew through the forest to the light.

Every moment it drew nearer and more distinct.

Then the blaze was plainly distinguished, and he saw beyond doubt that it was a campfire.

Allan wondered not a little why any one save Blackfeet should have made camp and retired to rest, allowing the blaze to remain. It seemed really like an invitation to a foe to come to the attack.

Nearer every moment the young hunter crept.

He was as noiseless and lithe as a shadow. Part of the way he traversed like a snake on his belly, a trick he had learned from that peerless strategist—Little Arrow, of the Assiniboines. In this manner he managed to draw very near the camp.

Soon he had reached a position from which he could command a good view of it. And now he came in for an astounding surprise.

The camp was deserted.

Flames played about several logs of wood, but there was not a human being in sight. The young hunter was dumfounded.

In this state of mind he came near making a fatal mistake. He was half tempted to arise and walk bodily up to the fire. This would have been his death warrant.

What restrained him was the peculiar cry of a nightbird, which seemed to spring from a thicket just in front of him. And outlined against the firelight of that thicket he saw the tufted head of a savage.

In an instant Allan saw through the game, and wondered why he had been so dull as not to see it before.

The campfire was simply a decoy to lure the unsuspecting traveler to his doom. The undergrowth about was alive with Indians.

The sensations of the young hunter may better be imagined than described as this dawned upon him. He realized in full the awful danger of his present position.

He had crept somewhat curiously, unseen by the lurking redskins, right into their very midst. Indeed, he hardly dared move for fear of encountering one.

Yet to remain where he was would be fatal. There was but one move for him, dangerous as it might seem, and this was to get out of the vicinity as quickly as possible.

He might spring to his feet and make a dash. But this would not be necessary if he could retrace his steps as he had come.

This he proceeded to do.

Cautiously he turned about and began noiselessly to worm his way through the undergrowth.

For a dozen yards he had splendid success. Then suddenly in putting forth a hand he put it upon the moccasined foot of a prostrate savage.

Instantly the foot was withdrawn and a guttural exclamation followed. A dark form was over Allan, and he acted.

He knew that the first blow was the best, and he determined to make it. Swift as a flash, he raised his rifle and pulled the trigger.

There was a sharp crack, an unearthly death yell. In an instant a chorus of yells filled the forest.

Then on through the undergrowth like a frightened deer went the young hunter. He could hear the foe in pursuit, yet he kept on.

Nor was he overtaken. He reached the river bank. Pushing the canoe into the water, he leaped into it and pushed off into the stream.

Down the river he paddled in the shadows. For a time he heard the savages in their futile search. Then the sounds died out altogether.

The night hours passed slowly by. At length daylight began to appear in the east. It was a welcome sight.

Allan drove the canoe along rapidly. He knew that he was yet some miles from the forks.

Suddenly he neared a bend in the river. He was near the shore and about to round the bend when an appalling sight restrained him.

Below upon the surface of the river, not a quarter of a mile away, were a dozen Indian war canoes loaded to the water's edge.

It was courting death to go near them. He turned the prow of his canoe and ran it toward shore.

But just as he did so a thrilling thing happened. There was a little childish scream of joy, and emerging from the bushes down to the water ran a **child's form**.

The little face was aglow with an expression of joy intense, the child's eyes were dancing, and the little arms were outstretched as she cried:

"Oh, Allan, you come to take me home to mamma. Oh, I am so glad! The bad Indian is dead, and I ran away from him. Oh, I am so glad!"

"Glad!" screamed Allan, leaping ashore, and catching his sister up in his arms. "If you are glad, what am I? Heaven be thanked, you are in my arms once more, little sister."

That was a joyful meeting. In an incoherent, childish way Alice told of her adventures. Allan was a little puzzled when she told of her Indian captor being shot.

"Who shot him, Puss?" he asked. "Didn't the man who shot him turn up?"

"I didn't see any man with a gun," replied the child. "He just fell right down and said: 'He shot!' Then he died, and I ran away."

"How far from here is that spot?" asked Allan.

Alice pointed through the woods, but just at this moment Allan remembered that they were in a dangerous position. If seen by the savages coming up the river bad results would be sure to accrue.

Accordingly, he hastened to draw his canoe up into some reeds. No sooner had he done this, when suddenly from the forest along the river bank a score of Blackfeet appeared.

They closed in upon the young hunter. For a moment he was appalled. Then, at a point further down, he saw a score of white men appear. They were the rescue party from the fort.

Allan brought his rifle to his shoulder, prepared to resist to the last, and, opening his mouth, let out a wild, strange shriek to draw the attention of his friends.

But the next moment the Blackfeet were upon him.

CHAPTER VII.

THE ATTACK ON THE FORT.

Allan's cry reached the ear of the party of white searchers on the shore as well as Kit Carson and Little Arrow.

The latter knew the call well and, instantly upon hearing, gave a spring forward and was off in that direction.

The fort party on the shore came charging down as fast as they could. Little Alice, with better sense than would have been credited to a little child, had retreated to the canoe and crept into it.

The Blackfeet would have made short work of Allan but for the youth's dexterity. He fired point blank and then flinging his rifle into the faces of his foes turned a back handspring and went into the dugout.

With the force the light craft shot fifty feet out into the stream.

"Down, Puss!" he cried to Alice. "Keep low, or they will hit us."

Tomahawks and other missiles came in a shower all about the canoe, but luckily the occupants were unharmed.

Then at that moment the band of rescuers from the fort struck the Blackfeet. A volley from their rifles had deadly effect.

A brief and terrific combat followed, but the Blackfeet were driven back.

Then down to the shore came Kit Carson and Little Arrow.

The Blackfeet broke and fled in terror. Soon the vicinity was clear of them.

Then happy recounting of experiences followed.

Colonel True clasped his darling child in his arms in a transport of delight.

The object of the mission had been successfully carried out and everybody was happy.

None were more hilarious than Kit Carson.

The return to the fort was a march of triumph.

The Blackfeet did not venture to attack the white settlers again, and the journey back was devoid of excitement beyond a few skirmishes.

Not until later in the day when the rescue party arrived within a couple of miles of Fort Point did they have any unpleasant experiences.

Then, as they were trudging along, suddenly Kit Carson paused.

"Wait a bit, comrades!" he cried, in his cheery voice. "Keep perfectly quiet fer a moment an' I'll be obleeged to ye all."

"What's the matter, Kit?" asked Colonel True, anxiously.

"Kain't tell ye jist yet," replied the old trapper, laconically.

Perfect silence was enjoined. Then the old trapper put his ear to the ground and listened for some moments.

After a while he said:

"Do any of ye hear anything?"

Then faintly to the hearing of all came the distant war-whoop of savages. Not a man in the group but turned pale.

"My heavens!" cried Colonel True. "The savages have attacked the settlement!"

Kit Carson nodded his head.

"I fear that mought be true," he said.

"Forward, then!" cried Colonel True, "for our homes, for our dear ones—we must reach the fort!"

All pressed forward. A few minutes later a slight eminence was reached. The distant sounds could be more plainly heard, and a dark cloud of smoke lay against the northern sky.

There was no longer any doubt that the Blackfeet had made an attack on the fort.

Doubtless they had seized upon it as a good opportunity, knowing that the best part of the fighting men were absent in the search for little Alice True. All this flashed through the mind of Colonel True.

The fort had been left in the charge of no one in particular. Harry Mains was there, and perhaps the best in authority, yet he was but a boy.

Despite this fact, however, a stubborn fight was being made. The crash of firearms filled the air, and the wild yells of the attacking savages made a horrid din.

The rescue party now reached a point from whence a good view of the blockhouse and fort could be had. It could be seen that as yet the savages had not succeeded in carrying the fight to close quarters.

Indeed, it is seldom the tactics of the savage to bring a fight into open field or close quarters. The present purpose of the red besiegers seemed to be mainly to set the buildings on fire.

Flaming brands and arrows were being thrown around the fort. Should these succeed in their purpose, then there was little doubt but that the savages would gain a bloody triumph.

Already they had succeeded in firing a number of the log huts. The smoke in vast clouds was rolling upwards.

"Hooray!" cried Kit Carson, throwing his coonskin cap in the air, "ther varmints have yit ter git inter ther fort. Now let's give 'em Hail Columbia! Hooray, boys!"

His words were an inspiration to the returning settlers. With a mighty cheer they rushed down the height and into the rear of the savage forces, making a fierce attack.

The effect upon the Blackfeet was thrilling. At once they were thrown into confusion, and breaking wildly fled. In less time than it takes to tell it they were routed.

The attack from the rear coming upon them so suddenly had terrified them. In vain their war chiefs tried to rally them. They fled for the cover of the forest.

The victorious settlers made the air ring with their cheers. These were answered from the fort, and aided materially to disconcert the savage foe.

The attacking party did not follow up their advantage. Colonel True knew well the peril of getting tangled up in the forest, and was satisfied to join those in the fort.

The gates were thrown open and the returning party were received with wild demonstrations of joy.

Little Alice, safe and well, was quickly clasped in her delighted mother's arms. It was a happy meeting, indeed. The brave rescuers were given an ovation.

But there was not a great deal of time to be lost in matters of this sort. A great danger threatened the fort, and it was necessary to face it at once.

The Blackfeet, from the cover of the woods, kept up their attack. Blazing arrows constantly threatened the destruction of the fort.

Finally Colonel True called Kit Carson to his side, and said:

"Kit, what are we going to do? It looks as if we have got to make some desperate move, or the fort will be burned in spite of all that we can do."

The old scout was thoughtful a moment. Then he said:

"Waal, I dunno but what ye're right, an' yet I don't like the idea of a sally. By tomahawk! How many mounted men can give me?"

"Seventy-five!" replied Colonel True.

"That settles it. By ther great guns, we'll give them reds a beatin', or my name ain't Kit Carson."

Colonel True hastily called his men together. They were all eager and willing to go. In fact, those left behind were disposed to grumble.

Ten minutes later the gates of the stockade swung open and out rode the band. Kit Carson rode at the head, and next to him were the boy parads, Allan and Harry.

Straight into the woods dashed the gallant little band on the charge. The savages fired volleys at their white foes and began to make a retreat, which was all in accord with their usual tactics.

Harry and Allan rode side by side. They discharged their rifles, and then began work with their pistols.

Suddenly they found themselves in the midst of the yelling horde. Harry was laying about him lustily with his clubbed rifle, when suddenly he saw Allan in a position of great danger.

The youth was unhorsed and struggling with a couple of powerful Blackfeet. The redskins were trying to batter his brains out with their tomahawks, but Allan laid about him valiantly with his clubbed rifle.

Harry spurred his horse forward, determined to save the life of his young pard.

CHAPTER VIII.

AN EVENING ON THE STOCKADE.

"Hold out, Al!" he cried, cheerily, as he dashed forward to the rescue. "I'm coming to help you! Don't give up!"

"Never!" shouted Allan, firmly. "I am not that kind, Harry!"

That moment, however, would have been Allan's last, but for Harry's sudden interposition. Just then a huge savage closed with the lad and brandished the tomahawk over his head.

Just in time Harry struck up the weapon, and brained the savage with the butt of his rifle. Swinging it over his head, he cleared a space about him in a very quick space of time.

The boy parads now fought side by side for some while. Others made to their relief, and the attack of the settlers was so fierce and determined that the Blackfeet were driven back.

It happened that they were but a remnant of the main body under Black Thunder, anyway. They soon gave up the strife and retired in confusion.

It was a decisive victory for the pioneers. They pursued the discomfited savages deep into the woods, and inflicted upon them such punishment as they would not soon forget.

Some of the Assiniboines continued to pursue the Blackfeet further.

But finally Kit Carson advocated return to the fort, and this was done. Happy, indeed were the victors. They were received joyfully on their return.

But with all the joy and triumph there was sadness of heart. Six of the brave pioneers had fallen in the battle. This left half that number of families lonely and dependent.

Indeed, the warfare, though now apparently in its infancy, was proving expensive, and fast thinning out the ranks. Colonel True remarked this, and with a cloud upon his brow said:

"We need reinforcements sadly. If they do not come I hardly know what we shall do. I fear that we shall soon grow too weak to successfully withstand the Blackfeet."

Kit Carson heard this, and said:

"Brave men to the number of half a hundred are now on the way hither. We ought to look fer that number tomorrow morning sure. Ye'll soon see the flatboats pointing up the river, be sure."

When night came Allan and Harry, with their rifles, went out upon the parapet of the fort in the moonlight and enjoyed a social chat while keeping a watch of the river. Harry had a beautiful tenor voice, and sang charmingly:

"Has she returned? No, she has not returned.

And her fate yet remains unknown,

While there's one sad heart is waiting yet

For the ship that will never come home."

Every hour was more firmly welding the bond of friendship between the two parads.

"Al," said Harry, earnestly, "I'm awful glad I came to Fort Point. If I hadn't we'd never have met probably."

"Not as soon as this," agreed Allan. "I'm awful glad you came, for you are the only person of my kind that I know hereabouts."

"Perhaps we'll always be pards."

"Of course we will. I will stick by you as long as you do to me."

"That will be forever."

"Harry," said Allan, after a while, "what do you think of Little Arrow?"

"What, the young Indian boy chief?"

"Yes."

"I think he is the very finest specimen of an Indian I ever knew in my life."

"So do I."

"The most of them are very treacherous, but I would trust Little Arrow with my life. He is honorable and true."

"What do you think you'll be, Allan, after you grow up to manhood?"

Allan laughed lightly.

"Well, I hardly know," he said. "I have not given the matter much thought. Probably I shall be a border settler, like my father."

"Ah, but all the border country may then be settled."

"True," agreed Allan; "but if there is a part of the world remote enough from civilization, where primeval forest and the charms of a wild life are to be found at the same time, I will seek it, and there find happiness in the free life of the hunter."

"You live up to the ideal," laughed Harry. "However, I agree with you, and will share with you that life, so that we may be pards through life."

"Pards forever!" cried Allan, impulsively. "I like you, Harry Mains!"

The two boy friends clasped hands warmly. There was more in that pressure than words could express.

Until a late hour the boy pards remained upon the stockade. Just as the moon shone out from behind a fleecy cloud a slender figure in white appeared before them.

"A ghost!" gasped Harry.

But Allan laughed hilariously.

"No, it's Myrtle!" he cried. "Come here, sister mine, and sit down beside us."

"I heard some beautiful singing," she said, in her sweet voice, "and it impelled me to come out. I hope I am not intruding."

"Intruding!" exclaimed Harry, in a thrilled voice; "do not believe that. You are—that is—you are very welcome."

The young pioneer's blood surged in hot masses through his veins. He experienced something like an ecstatic thrill of delight as the young girl's presence drew near to him.

In her artless manner she joined them, not affecting to notice the bashful, eager attitude of Harry Mains. Yet she would not have been feminine had she not been conscious of the effect her presence produced.

That strange, subtle influence which instinctively floats between lovers held possession of both at that moment. But few words had ever passed between them, and yet each was aware of a warm feeling toward the other.

Myrtle was a girl of angelic presence, unlike the other girls of the colony in which the hoyden element generally predominated. Shy, gentle and reserved, kind of heart and true as steel, she had won his encomiums of praise and admiration from all in the colony.

"She is too mighty fine fer the rest of us!" declared one of the settlers; "her place is higher nor a life at Fort Point."

In a free, unreserved, yet charming manner, she sat there upon the stockade in the moonlight and conversed with the boy pards. Finally Allan said:

"Oh, Myrtle, Harry has a beautiful tenor voice, and it will go grandly with yours. Just sing with him, will you?"

Harry lifted his eyes questioningly to Myrtle's face.

The young girl flushed just a trifle, but almost instantly began to sing.

It was a beautiful, sentimental ballad, full of depth and pathos. Her voice was clear and bell-like, and withal so sweet as to seem like that of an angel.

Harry caught the air, and his rich tenor blended softly in. As for Allan he sat spellbound.

Never in his life, he thought, had he heard such music.

It was like music celestial from the spheres. Forth upon the night air it floated, soft and thrilling and bewitching. Strain after strain filled space in beautiful cadence.

When at length it died away Allan drew a deep breath.

"Wonderful!" he exclaimed, impulsively. "You sing so beautifully, and you look so charming together that you ought not to be separated."

This was an explosion which was most astounding to Harry and Myrtle. The young girl's face was crimson, and she cried:

"Why, Allan True! How could you be so rude? I—I—why, how could you? I am surprised and—and——"

She paused in absolute confusion. Harry was completely aghast with his extreme diffidence. But the mischievous Allan laughed until the tears ran down his face.

"Well, well!" he cried, merrily. "What a sensation I have created! I declare——"

But before he could finish a surprising thing happened. There was a gasping sound in their rear, and suddenly a snakelike form seemed to rise from the ground almost at Allan's feet and make an attempt to glide away into the dense gloom.

CHAPTER IX.

RIVALS IN LOVE.

In an instant Allan's trumpet voice arose in sharp command:

"Halt where you are, or I will fire at you!"

The slender figure came to a stop almost instantly and a broken voice in husky tones, said:

"Forgive Little Arrow! Indian boy mean no harm. He love to hear white girl sing. No harm."

Instantly Allan dropped the butt of his rifle to the ground.

"Oh, it's you, is it, Arrow?" he cried. "Why, come right up here and join us. What are you afraid of? Ah, you bashful rogue!"

But the Indian lad stood statue-like in the gloom. Something like a sob broke from him, and there was a peculiar thrill in his voice as he replied:

"Little Arrow go to his people. He say to white friends, good-night."

Then like a shadow he was gone.

For some moments the three young people stood gazing at each other in wonderment.

"What in the world is the matter with the Arrow?" cried Allan, in amazement. Then he glanced roguishly at Myrtle. "Ah, I'll bet I can guess. He is dead in love with you, Myrtle. Have you been encouraging the poor chap?"

These words spoken at random and in jest yet conveyed more of meaning and of truth than any there imagined.

Myrtle True turned deadly pale. She staggered and would have fallen but for Harry's supporting arm. The latter youth's face was stern and white, and he cast a dark look into the gloom.

"Impossible!" he said, in a tense voice; "the young Indian would never dare to do such a thing as that."

"Of course not!" cried Allan, forcing a laugh. "I was only joking, Puss. Don't mind what I said."

"I do not mind it, Allan," she said, quietly, drawing the shawl closer about her shoulders. "You ask me though, if I have encouraged Little Arrow. I may say that I have never spoken to him but once. Then he asked me to be his squaw——"

"The presumption of the scoundrel!" cried Harry, hotly.

"I'll thrash him for the insult!" hissed Allan.

But Myrtle stepped between them, and her air was that of a tragic queen.

"No!" she cried, in a firm, ringing voice. "You have both too much good sense and manhood to do that. Remember the untaught soul and wild spirit of this poor Indian lad and bear with him. He is not to blame for establishing an ideal even in poor me, but he is unfortunate in not having met reciprocation. He is a noble young Indian, and I have pity and sympathy for him, but scorn or hatred I could not feel."

The boy pards voluntarily bowed their heads before this burst of generous sentiment.

"Puss, you're right!" cried Allan, impulsively. "Little Arrow is not to blame for his feelings. I feel sorry for him."

Harry said nothing, and Myrtle turned to go. The boy pards silently escorted her to the blockhouse. They doffed their coonskin caps, and she bade them a soft good-night.

"Well, Hal," said Allan, blithely, "I think I'll turn in, too. Good-night."

Harry turned away, and leaving the stockade had started for the cabin which his father had chosen for their temporary home.

But he did not feel like retiring. The night air felt cool and refreshing upon his fevered brow. His footsteps led him to the river bank.

Here he leaned up against a tree and seemed lost in contemplation of the sluggish current. But his mind was occupied with far different thoughts.

He could not banish the sweet face of Myrtle True from his mind. In spite of his youth, he was quite capable of the sentiment of love, and he was prone to admit that his was a bad case.

"I wonder if she really likes me?" he mused, and then remembered her reassuring glances with an ecstatic thrill.

Suddenly he heard a footstep in his rear and turned. The gloom was not so deep but that he could recognize the form of Little Arrow. The young Indian stood before him with folded arms.

"Let not the white hunter be afraid," said the young Assiniboine, in a voice which sounded soft and sad. "The Arrow is his friend."

One moment Harry hesitated. Then he impulsively put out his hand.

"I believe you, Little Arrow," he said. "Come, let us understand one another. You love the white girl?"

"The white boy has spoken truly," replied the Assiniboine, in a steady voice. "Little Arrow cannot help the thrill in his heart. He can see nothing in his dreams but the face of the White Rose. His heart is heavy, his soul is dark, for he is an Indian, and the white girl can never love him in return."

"I am sorry for you," said Harry, in deep sincerity.

The eyes of the young chief bashed.

"Little Arrow is an Indian," he replied. "His soul is filled with the passion of his race. He could creep into the fort in the night; he could steal the White Rose away; in the wilds he could hold her captive and learn her to love him and to live in his teepee—"

"You young scoundrel!" hissed Harry, grasping him by the throat. "You'll never dare to do that."

The muscles of each were taut as steel. Their passion blazing faces were close together in the dim light, the eyes of each flashed hatred into those of the other, their hot breath fanned each other's cheeks, and thus they stood several seconds statue-like.

Then slowly the passion died away. Their grip relaxed, and they stood facing each other.

"Me can see it all," said the young Indian, in a deep, strange voice; "the white boy loves the White Rose."

Then he turned and began to glide away into the gloom, saying, brokenly:

"Indian boy can never have the love of the White Rose. His heart is broken, for the white boy has stolen that from him which was dearer than life. Little Arrow can hate!"

Harry stood irresolute in the night for some time after the Indian had disappeared. His brow was dark, and his bosom seethed with conflicting passions as he made his way homeward.

Little he slept that night. At an early hour he arose, and going forth, saw that there was a great crowd upon the river bank.

Far down the river the flatboats could be seen which were bearing to the fort the new arrivals from below. Harry experienced a thrill of joy, for he knew that his own mother was in the party.

As he drew nearer he saw that in the party upon the river bank were Myrtle and Alice, who she held by the hand. The young girl's face was turned slightly away and looked beautiful, but a trifle sad.

Kit Carson was waving his cap excitedly. One of the settlers had climbed to the top of a rock and was doing the same, while David Mains, with rifle in hand, was just turning away.

Harry joined the party, and at once fell in with Allan. The latter was in a jovial spirit.

Nearer drew the party in the flatboats, and the pioneers cheered lustily.

Then came the disembarkation and the happy greetings and reunion.

The leader of the party, however, brought ominous tidings. He affirmed that a dozen miles below they had been attacked by the Blackfeet, and had only escaped annihilation by desperate fighting.

There was no doubt but that a dark cloud hung over the

border settlement, and that danger most awful was in the near future.

But there were bold hearts and strong arms to defend the fort.

Kit Carson had agreed to remain until it was an assured fact that the Indian outbreak was over.

Then he declared that it was his purpose to go back to the southwest.

Thus matters progressed for several days at the fort.

A new stockade was built, inclosing all the cabins, ammunition was laid in goodly store, and every preparation made for a hard fight. And every moment the cloud hovering over the fort grew darker and nearer the bursting.

CHAPTER X.

TRIALS OF SKILL.

But in spite of all this the settlers allowed themselves some little diversion from their stern duties.

There were hunting parties organized and little social entertainments given in the block-house. Indeed, the sense of dependence upon each other for amusement and entertainment was most pleasant.

One day the Assiniboines held a fete. There were to be athletic games and sports, and the white hunters were invited to participate.

The Assiniboines were all splendid athletes. Not even their more powerful foes, the Blackfeet, could excel them in this respect.

Everybody was interested in the affair, and none more so than Harry and Allan, the boy parads.

Extensive preparations were made by the Indians.

A wide and level plain just behind the fort was chosen as the field of sport, and at the appointed hour a large crowd were on hand.

Upon one side of the field the Assiniboine warriors were ranged. Upon the other side were the white settlers.

It was an event of no light sort for the participants. Life at the fort at best was monotonous, and anything in the line of festivity was exceedingly welcome.

The medicine men had a preliminary dance, and executed some rites of a heathenish sort to propitiate their gods. Then the athletic sports began.

First, the Indian braves stripped, save for breechclouts, to the number of ten; the strongest and swiftest of all the runners stood upon a line.

It was to be a race for a distance of about one hundred yards. The Indian brave who won should have the privilege of challenging the fastest paleface runner.

Allan and Harry, with Myrtle and little Alice True, sat near the line, and with deepest interest watched the runners.

"I shall select that tall brave with the scar upon his cheek," said Harry Mains. "He is the strongest and most supple, and ought to win."

"Pshaw!" exclaimed Allan, "he will not be the winner. I shall pick Little Arrow. He is very light of foot."

"Little Arrow!"

Harry glanced eagerly through the line for the slender boy chief, whom he had not seen before. He was given a start, for he saw that the Indian lad's darkly flashing eyes were turned toward Myrtle, as if to make sure that her eyes were upon him.

And the young pioneer saw the color gently creep into Myrtle's face, and a quick pang of jealousy shot through his breast.

"She sees him," he thought. "She is interested. Yet she cannot like him."

Harry saw that the Indian lad had bent forward, as if infused with new energy, and was trembling like an aspen. Every muscle stood out in bold relief.

Would Little Arrow win the race?

Now that Allan had called the attention of the others to the fact that he was one of the contestants, all felt a deep interest.

The suspense was soon to be relieved.

A tall Indian stood by the line and gave a sudden sharp cry.

Away went the line of runners.

How they did flash down the course, as if borne by the wings of the wind.

Everybody with tense nerves and deep excitement watched the contest.

Straining every nerve they went on, their brown legs twinkling in the sunlight, on and on. Now they draw nearer the line.

A great cry went up from all over the field.

"Red Dog has it!"

"No; it is Big Buffalo!"

Then the shouts of the crowd swelled into a mighty vociferous roar, and Allan True flung his hat high in the air, shouting:

"My champion has won! Hurrah for Little Arrow!"

In the last ten feet Little Arrow had sprung ahead and won the test. He was the champion of the Assiniboine runners, and the one matched to beat the fastest runner among the palefaces.

The boy chief came in for the ovation in which all joined. As he stood in the crowd trembling with excitement, and with flashing eyes and haughty poise received the verdict, he made a picture of the type aborigine, which was exceedingly rare.

"Well, Harry," cried Allan True, stripping off his buckskin, "it is our turn."

Harry Mains compressed his lips and his thin nostrils distended like those of a thoroughbred horse. A queer premonition was upon him that he would be the one to settle the final run with Little Arrow.

But he endeavored to restrain this feeling. There were fast runners at the fort, men who no doubt could beat him easily. So he told himself. But he would try.

Ten of the most supple and athletic of the settlers were brought to the line now.

Allan and Harry were there. As they started for the line, Myrtle True had given Harry a glance and a smile which had caused his blood to boil.

"I will win it," he muttered, between clenched teeth, and somehow he felt that it was to win her favor that he was racing.

He knew that he could easily outrun Allan.

But he looked doubtfully at a lanky trapper who had claimed to have run down a duck deer in the woods.

Then he bent low on the line and waited for the word. Every muscle was taut, every nerve strained when it came.

"Ready! Go!"

They were off in a flash. Down that stretch of green-sward they went like meteors.

Harry Mains dug his toes into the turf and ran as never before in his life. His lithe form was bent almost double, and he sped like a deer over that strip of turf.

Nearer the goal drew. Now Harry had drawn clear of the crowd and the only one beside him was the lank trapper.

But the latter was fast losing ground. Harry knew that if he could keep up the present pace he was sure to win.

As yet his muscles had not flagged. Nearer he drew. Now the line was reached.

A tremendous cheer went up. Harry Mains had won the race.

The young pioneer was given a grand ovation. The crowd surged about him, extending homely congratulations, and giving him encouragement for the final race.

"Little Arrow and Harry Mains!" exclaimed Allan True, as he returned, panting with his exertions to the line of spectators. "Whew! What a race that will be!"

Myrtle flushed and something like a light of pain dwelt in her beautiful brown eyes.

Harry shot a covert glance toward her, but she averted her gaze. The young pioneer's heart beat like a trip-hammer.

Little Arrow had stalked haughtily forward and stood upon the line. The Indian lad was like a Sphinx.

If he was excited he did not show it. His face was a blank in its lack of expression, and his form statue-like. But Harry Mains was eager and trembling.

How the young pioneer envied his antagonist, his nerve, and coolness at that moment—that stoical calmness so characteristic of the Indian.

Neither looked at the other. Few in the crowd realized what the contest really meant to each. There they crouched upon the line awaiting the word.

The interest was intense. The contrast between the champions of the two runners was marked.

Upon one side were the white settlers, nervous, excited, and eager. The Indians, upon the other hand, were silent, statue-like, and calm, and apparently devoid of any interest whatever in the affair.

"Go in and win, Harry!" whispered Allan True, passing near him.

Then Harry dared to shoot one swift glance toward the spot where Myrtle sat. He saw the strange, startled, eager light in her eyes. It nerved him to make the one supreme effort of his life.

CHAPTER XI.

LITTLE ARROW'S DEFEAT.

All were upon the qui vive now. The two youthful runners crouched there on the line waiting for the word.

It came suddenly.

"Go!"

Instantly both lithe forms bounded forward. Little Arrow gained the start, and flying down the course was a length ahead of his white antagonist.

From the start to the finish it was a close race. Little Arrow's speed never flagged.

Everybody held their breath and watched the flying forms with a thrill. On and on they went. Nearer they drew every moment to the line.

And now a deafening cheer went up. In the last twenty yards Harry Mains was seen to put on a spurt, and passed his antagonist with the greatest of ease.

Across the line they went thus. Harry Mains was the winner.

The din was deafening as the wild cheers went up. The result seemed very gratifying to the crowd.

The first to meet the victor was Allan True. He fairly embraced his pard in the transport of the moment.

"You have covered yourself with glory, Harry!" he cried.

"That was a great race!"

"I simply did my best," replied Harry, modestly.

Then his heart gave a leap as he noted the glance of joy which Myrtle gave him. He was a happy youth at that moment.

Upon the other hand, the result had produced a curious effect upon Little Arrow.

The boy chief had thrown himself upon the ground with his face buried in the turf. The proud Indian spirit was stung by his defeat; the vengefulness of a savage mind was struggling with a better nature.

In vain his own people tried to cheer him up. He would not be consoled. Life looked drear to him. He had suffered defeat.

Suddenly, however, Harry Mains started toward him.

All the generosity and sympathy of the young pioneer's spirit was aroused. He went up to the spot and said, gently:

"Never mind it, Arrow. I am your friend, and always will be."

His rival's voice seemed to have a stinging effect upon the Indian youth. In an instant he was upon his feet. He regarded Harry haughtily, and replied:

"The paleface has won. Little Arrow's heart is broken. Why comes he here now to taunt his fallen foe?"

"I come not to taunt you," replied Harry, gently. "I have won, and I want to be good friends with you, Arrow, just the same."

For a moment the Indian lad stood quivering before his rival. All the fire and spirit of his nature shone in his dark eyes.

Suddenly he threw aside the skin mantle which had covered his shoulders. He walked straight up to Harry and seized him by the arms.

"White boy mebbe can outrun the Arrow, but he cannot wrestle him."

The light in the young Indian's eyes was comprehensive to Harry. He understood well enough what he was aiming at. It was a tacit challenge for the favor of one whom both loved. Instinctively Harry divined that if the young Indian lost this contest then he would abandon his aspirations for the white girl's love.

A queer sensation came over Harry Mains.

For a moment he hesitated. It was not fear that impelled him to do this.

Then he said:

"All right, Arrow, I will do it."

A gleam of hope, almost of insane joy, shone in the Indian youth's eyes. He drew a deep breath, gave a guttural exclamation, and they closed.

Without a word, but breathless with interest, the crowd gathered about.

No one sought to interfere.

Each understood well enough that it was to settle a spirit of rivalry between the two. The interest was intense.

Indian braves and trappers, squaws and white women and children all watched the contest with bated breath.

Little Arrow was the famed athlete of the Assiniboine tribe. Lithe and muscular and scientific withal, it was not an easy matter to defeat him.

Harry Mains, however, had enjoyed good training.

At the down-river settlements he had wrestled much, and few of the boys of his age could worst him. Yet he did not by any means yield to over-confidence as he faced the Indian youth.

Now they closed, and the contest began. It proved a long, hard fought, and desperate one.

Lock after lock, and hold after hold was made, only to be broken consecutively. Indeed, it was for a long time doubtful as to which would win. But at last Harry succeeded in catching his lithe antagonist by the waist.

It was a risky move, and all depended upon superior quickness. But the Indian youth was not quite agile enough this time, and almost before he had time to realize it he was thrown.

Down he went with stunning force upon his back.

Strange to say, he did not move. He lay there as if overcome with mute despair, gazing in a hopeless, anguished way up into the face of his smiling young antagonist, who stood over him.

"There you are, Arrow," said Harry, with a friendly smile. But the Indian youth did not reply.

Harry saw the vacant look in his eyes, and instantly realized that he had fainted. The mental shock had been too much.

In a moment the young pioneer was down upon his knees and supporting his head with eager solicitude. The crowd ceased their cheering and crowded sympathetically nearer. Kit Carson elbowed his way forward.

"Stand back, all of ye!" he roared. "The lad has fainted."

"Hyar's some whisky!" cried one of the trappers, holding up a flask.

A little of it was given to the Indian lad, and he revived. But he was listless and apathetic.

Black Dog, the old Assiniboine chief, who was Little Arrow's warm friend, assisted Kit Carson to carry the Indian lad into a house near.

He was placed upon a couch, and the trapper banished all the people from the room save Black Dog.

Kit was quite a good nurse and doctor, and proceeded to make a hasty examination of Little Arrow, to if possible learn where he was injured.

But beyond a few slight bruises his body showed no marks of a serious sort.

"Well, I swow!" muttered the trapper. "That is queer. But the lad is sick, an' thar ain't no doubt of it."

Then an inkling of the truth began to dawn upon Kit. He drew a long, shrill whistle.

It was easy enough now to see that the lad's trouble was altogether one of the mind and not of the body. His sufferings were mental and not physical.

With an inscrutable light in his keen eyes Kit bent over the Indian lad. Black Dog sat at the foot of the couch.

"Look yer, Arrow!" said the trapper, softly. "What is the real matter with ye? Are ye a leetle bit riled up tew think thet ther gal saw ye git downed? Eh? Ain't ye a leetle bit sweet on the white squaw? Waal, don't ye know better nor that? Her heart don't belong tew her, I reckon."

A spasm of pain seemed to contort the Indian lad's features.

Then the reaction came. The savage nature was bound to assert itself.

For a moment he trembled like an aspen leaf. Then up from the couch he leaped like a panther.

"Wagh!" he cried, with unparalleled fierceness. "Little Arrow has suffered, but his heart will not break. He hates the white boy, and will hunt him upon the warpath. Up, Assiniboines, Little Arrow calls you to the war-dance. Gitche Maintou has said it. It shall be war!"

CHAPTER XII.

TRANSIENT TROUBLE.

The stirring words of Little Arrow rang through the cabin and reached the ears of a knot of the Assiniboines outside.

They were electrical in effect, and but for certain things might have had a most disastrous effect.

The Indian mind is easily inflamed by a fancied wrong.

None of them had really taken kindly to the defeat suffered by their young chief. His declaration of war now kindled the flame effectually.

A tremendous whoop went up on the air.

The war cry went from one end of the Assiniboine camp to the other. Warriors rushed for their weapons. Squaws and boys began at once to cast their teepees.

All this happened in a very few moments. Black Dog had run out and among the Assiniboines.

Kit Carson saw that a serious crisis was impending.

The scout was a man of quick thought and action. He saw at once that it was a prime necessity to nip this insurrection in the bud.

He knew that the impassioned utterance of Little Arrow was but the spontaneous outburst of a savage nature unable to control its jealous impulses.

Little Arrow had caught a tomahawk from Black Dog's belt, and was about to rush out into the village with the war-cry upon his lips.

But Kit Carson, quick as a flash, planted himself before the excited Indian lad.

He grasped the wrist of the hand which held the tomahawk, and wrenched the weapon from his grasp.

"Hold, ye red varmint!" he shouted, fiercely. "If ye don't I'll take the heart right out of ye!"

Little Arrow's eyes blazed with fire. He writhed like a snake in the trapper's strong grasp.

But Kit held on to him, and he was like a child in that powerful grasp.

The trapper held him off at arms' length, and then began to talk to him like a father.

"Do ye know what ye're trying to do, Arrow?" he said sternly. "Don't be a fool now. It was a fair and square, up and up deal with ye an' Harry. Ye had as good a chance as he did. Now, I don't believe your people want to fight the palefaces."

"Little Arrow has been wronged!" he gritted. "Only the blood of his foe can atone for it!"

"Look here," said Kit, coolly. "Ye're not goin' tew stir your people up in such a way. If ye do——"

But in some manner Little Arrow had squirmed out of Kit's grasp. Before the trapper could do aught to help it he went through the cabin door like a flash.

A stirring war-whoop pealed from his lips as he dashed among his people. Kit Carson was quick to act.

He started at once for the fort.

But word had already reached there. Colonel True and a score of armed men rushed out from the stockade.

Everywhere the alarm had spread. The settlers' families were all rushing for the protection of the stockade.

"Do they really mean fight, Kit?" cried the colonel, as he met the old trapper.

"I fear they do, kernel," replied the trapper, huskily. "Thar is jest one thing tew do."

"What?"

"Bring 'em up with a short rope at once. They'll be sorry fer it all arter it's too late. Show 'em sumthin' now."

"You are right!" cried Colonel True. "Come on, boys; close in on them."

With a cheer the pioneer band at once charged upon the Assiniboines. It was just as Kit had said, the best possible move to make.

The Assiniboines saw the white settlers coming. They were not foolhardy, as were the Blackfeet, and at once a change of sentiment resulted.

Common sense prevailed.

Half the teepees had been struck. A large band of the Assiniboines were in line. But one of them advanced with hands up for a truce.

"Halt, men!" cried Colonel True. "Let us first hear what they have to say."

The white settlers halted and the truce-bearer came forward.

He was one of the prominent chiefs of the tribe. He came up to Colonel True servile enough.

Back of him walked Little Arrow with dignity and hauteur. But there was also an abashed air about him.

"Well," said Col. True, brusquely, "what ails you now?"

"Paleface hurt Injun. Play him false. No like! Heap fight!" said the chief, brokenly.

"Oh, you want fight, do ye?" said Kit Carson, scathingly.

"Waal, p'r'aps yew would like tew be driven out inter ther woods fer ther Blackfeet tew make mincemeat of. Why, gol-hang ye, we're the only friends ye've got in ther world, ye pizen reptiles!"

The chief stood doggedly aside and allowed Little Arrow to do the talking.

The boy chief spoke in low tones.

"It is Little Arrow whose heart is bitter against the white boy. He hates him!"

"And fer that reason you would involve your people in disastrous war!" said Col. True. "For shame, Arrow, you are too sensible for that!"

"Our people are not afraid to fight," said Arrow, resolutely.

Col. True had read the Indian youth's heart aright. Sincerely he pitied him. He dismounted from his horse and advanced toward him, holding out his hand.

"Arrow," he said kindly, "I have always had a great deal of respect and admiration for you. I know that you are sensible, and that you will listen to me."

"The white father speaks well," said Arrow, in a softer voice.

"I can assure you, my boy," continued the colonel, "that you are not doing right. Harry defeated you, but it was owing to your misfortune. Suppose that you had defeated him. Would it be right for him to declare war against your people? This is not a sufficient cause for war."

As the colonel went on in kindly tones, the boy's features worked. It could be plainly seen that he was struggling with his passions. He could understand the logic of the colonel's remarks, and knew that he was wrong.

He was too noble to be unfair. Indian that he was, he was neither treacherous nor cowardly, and in this respect he stood almost alone. His head dropped upon his chest.

Then he drew a deep breath and suddenly lifted his head.

"The white father is right!" he said. "I will go to my white brother and tell him I am sorry."

As it happened, Harry was not twenty feet away, in the ranks of the settlers. Little Arrow rushed up and threw his arms about him.

"I have come to tell my white brother that I love him!" he cried, in earnest tones and with tearful eyes. "Never again shall there be bad blood between my white brother and Little Arrow."

"Hurrah!" cried Harry, impulsively, returning the embrace. "We will be friends forever, Arrow. As you say, we will never fight again!"

And thus ended the affair, which came near bringing most awful disaster upon the settlement.

One day a runner brought in the alarming news that David Mains had been captured by the Blackfeet Indians. He had gone out with a party of hunters, had become separated from them and had fallen into the hands of the Indians. Soon a relief party was organized by Kit Carson. The boy parads were in it, and they soon distance the other members. All were in canoes.

After paddling for some distance they became aware that their canoe was filling from a bad leak, which necessitated them abandoning the canoe and pursuing their way along the bank of the river on foot.

Soon they struck a trail, and after following it for some distance perceived a party of Indians in single file going through a piece of woods.

The boy parads determined to try a bit of strategy. So they separated. Allan struck in after the Indians. Suddenly the crack of firearms sounded and several of the Indians fell. They had been attacked by a war party of Assiniboinés. Allan resolved to join the Assiniboinés, but before he could do so the Blackfeet fell upon him and made him a prisoner. The Assiniboinés divided into two parties. One party beat a hasty retreat, and in this party were Allan True and David Mains.

Harry Mains came across a party of Assiniboinés, led by Red Eagle, and joined them. Soon a Blackfeet village was sighted. They saw the Blackfeet preparing to put two men to torture, and Harry recognized them as his father and Allan True.

Then Red Eagle ordered the Assiniboinés to charge the Blackfeet.

The party of settlers under Kit Carson had kept on down the stream. They soon struck a canoe party of Blackfeet Indians and then a battle royal ensued. The settlers went ashore and so did the Indians.

CHAPTER XIII

THE BLACKFEET DEFEATED.

Down the river the settlers fought. Soon they had driven the foe before them. It was a plucky battle.

The Blackfeet were beaten back, and the settlers for a time held possession of the field.

But now it was natural that they should think of David Mains.

"He oughter be rescued," said one of the hunters, sentimentously. "I say, let's go on the trail!"

"That all right," said Kit Carson, "an' we'll all go if you'll tell us which way to go."

"Waal, I opine that the varmints have gone to the village."

"Do you know whar that it?"

"Waal, you kin bet."

"Show us the way thar."

Hedges could not demur. He mounted a spare horse and cried:

"Come on, boys! Hyar goes fer annihilatin' ther reds!"

The horse had been captured from the Blackfeet. Hedges was permitted to ride it as he was much exhausted.

The others followed on foot. In they went at full speed.

All the rest of the day they tramped tediously through the wilds.

At night they camped in a small ravine. They were nearer the village than they had imagined.

Shortly after daybreak they came in sight of the Blackfeet village. This was an astounding revelation to them.

The village was in a clearing upon the shores of a placid lake.

There were the wigwams and the life of an Indian village. But out upon the plain was a sight which gave them a wild thrill.

Bound to stakes they saw two white men.

Even at that distance they had no trouble in recognizing them as David Mains and Allan True.

But all about the prisoners was a struggling, yelling mass of savages. The war token of the Assiniboinés could be seen.

It was an easy enough matter to comprehend the situation.

Kit Carson took it in at a glance.

Not a moment did the trapper hesitate.

In his trumpet voice he called:

"Forward, men; kill every doggoned Blackfeet ye kin see! Whoop-la! Charge!"

The words of the famous scout were as an inspiration to the avenging settlers. Forward they went with a wild cheer.

Harry Mains and the Assiniboinés were battling fiercely with the Blackfeet.

Down came the charging pioneers under Kit Carson.

They came on like a whirlwind, and struck the Blackfeet in the flank of their position.

The result was tragic.

The Blackfeet got panic stricken. The air was filled with the grim music of exploding Derringers and rifles.

The slaughter of the red foes was for a little time wholly immense. The Blackfeet fell like sheep.

They were driven from their village, and their teepees were wrecked and destroyed. Back into the forest they were driven.

The first move of Harry Mains as soon as he could get clear of the crowd was to rush to the side of his father and Allan.

Quickly he cut their bonds. The reunion was a most joyous one.

The Assiniboinés captured many of their foe's scalps and were happy. The Blackfeet retired defeated, and then the victorious pioneers began to think of returning home.

Through the forest they cut in a straight line. It was the purpose to follow the river bank until the fort was reached.

But when the river bank was reached a thrilling incident occurred.

From beyond a bend in the bank not fifty yards distant there came a sudden sharp volley of rifle balls.

One of them clipped the tail of Kit Carson's coonskin cap. Another penetrated the sleeve of his buckskin jacket.

Had this been all the harm done all would have been well. But it was not.

Three of the white settlers fell and two of them dead. It was a tragic incident, and palled upon the party for a moment so forcibly that they could not act.

Kit Carson, however, was not long inactive.

CHAPTER XIV.

A BEAVER HUNT.

The sudden attack of the foe at the river side, and which resulted in the death of two of their party was no light blow to the settlers.

Kit Carson was the first to recover his self-possession.

He made quick action.

"Back!" he cried, in a voice of thunder. "Back for your lives, every man of you."

The order was quickly obeyed. Back into the woods sprung the white settlers. They were none too soon.

Another volley came rattling through the tree branches, but it did but little harm.

The settlers now began to retaliate. To do this it was first necessary to find the foe's position.

This, however, did not prove a difficult task.

They were in hiding behind the river bank, and a little flank movement brought half a hundred of them into plain view.

At once fire was opened upon them. Their position was now an exposed one, and they took to their canoes.

They were evidently a part of the party with whom the white settlers had done battle the night before.

Out into the river shot the canoes.

They were now a clean target for the accurate aim of the woodsmen.

Shot after shot was given them with crushing effect. The current carried down the corpse of many a Blackfoot.

But they finally got beyond range and the battle was over.

The party after burying the dead started on the long march back to the fort.

In due course it was reached without further hindrance.

The joyful reunion there was a glad sight to witness.

At the stockade gate Allan True was met by his mother and little Alice. The boy was wrapped in his devoted mother's embrace while she wept and cried for joy.

"Oh, I have had the worst of fears!" she declared. "I did not believe that I would ever see you alive again, my boy!"

Harry Mains received the same greeting from his mother, and Myrtle True came up and said in her sweet, shy way:

"I am so glad that you have come safely back. Oh, this awful Indian war I hope will soon be over."

Things once more resumed their routine at the fort.

The Blackfeet had evidently suffered such a repulse that they did not care to venture another attack right away.

For several days all was quiet.

Thus matters were, when one day Little Arrow came to Harry and Allan and proposed a trip up the Bear creek some miles above to set some beaver traps.

The young Indian chief had recovered wholly from his hatred of Harry, and was apparently extremely desirous of his friendship.

He explained that he had some traps already set up the creek, and expected to find beaver in them.

Nothing could be better calculated to fire the soul and enthusiasm of the boys than this.

Of course they were ready and eager to go.

"Little Arrow, you are a trump!" cried Allan, slapping the Indian boy on the back. "Of course we will go."

"And me, too!"

All turned with surprise to see a diminutive form before them, and a dusky face eagerly upturned.

It was Little Hawk, the boy who had been with Harry upon the trail with the Assiniboines some nights previous.

"Little Hawk go, too?"

The pleading manner and words could not be resisted.

Harry laughed boisterously and replied in a jolly manner: "Of course you shall—that is, if Little Arrow is willing."

The boy chief nodded his head laconically. Little Hawk turned a handspring and ran off to get his bows and arrows.

A short while later they were upon the river bank fully equipped.

Little Arrow was there with his canoe all ready, and the Hawk came scrambling down to the water's edge.

They piled into the canoe, and then Harry and the Arrow paddled the canoe up the big river.

Several hours were consumed on the trip up the river. But finally the party entered the creek which was to lead them to the haunts of the beaver.

The creek grew narrower as they advanced. Soon they came upon traces of beaver in plenty.

There were remnants of dams, driftwood, and the huts of the most valued of all furbearing animals.

But as yet nothing was to be seen of the beaver.

The boys understood, however, that they must go some ways further on before finding the animals.

These were the deserted haunts of the animal.

Soon on up the stream they paddled. Suddenly Little Arrow said:

"Wait! White boy stop here!"

At once the canoe came to a stop. The Arrow sat statue-like in the bow, watching a ripple in the current ahead.

Suddenly, as swift as a flash, his rifle went to his shoulder.

Just a moment a black object appeared above the waves some distance ahead.

Crack!

The rifle spoke sharply.

"Forward!" cried the young Indian, bending to the paddle.

Forward the canoe shot. There, floating lifeless on top of the water was a fine beaver.

The animal was pulled aboard, and the canoe went on.

But nothing more was seen of the beavers. The shot had disturbed them, and they had beat a retreat, doubtless to the bottom of the creek.

It was seldom that one could be bagged in this manner.

Four fine animals were secured from the traps. These were skinned, and then the boys went about setting new traps.

They had accomplished this, and then it was decided to go ashore and eat some dinner.

The canoe was accordingly run up on the sands.

The boys sprang out and were about to dash up the bank, when a startling thing happened. An arrow came hurtling through the branches and struck Little Arrow, the boy chief, in the breast.

CHAPTER XV.

A SAD FATE.

With a sharp cry of pain the boy chief reeled back.

But even as the arrow had come, Harry had chanced to glance upward and saw a dusky form through the branches.

Quick as a flash, he raised his rifle and fired.

There was a wild yell of agony, and out from the copse there leaped a powerful Blackfeet brave. Down the bank he rolled a corpse.

The shot had proved fatal. Allan threw one arm about Little Arrow, and cried:

"To cover! Quick, for your lives!"

But as luck had it, this was the only enemy in the vicinity. He had been alone.

So the momentary alarm was groundless. However, the boys all reached cover in the forest.

Then for a few moments there was lively work scouting in the vicinity. But no other Blackfeet were seen.

Harry Mains held Little Arrow's head in his lap. The arrow yet protruded from his breast.

It was not deemed safe as yet to pull it out, for, with an awful sense of horror and anguish, the boys saw that it had doubtless reached a vital spot.

The young Indian's face had become drawn and pinched, his eyes were glazed, and his breath came short and quick.

A greenish hue had begun to spread over his skin. It was certain that the deadly virus was in his system.

But he reached up and caught Harry's hand.

Already the rattle of death was in his throat. He seized Harry's hand and smiled in a pitiful way.

"Little Arrow will die," he said, slowly. "White girl is yours. There is no place for Indian boy in this world. He go beyond. He go to the happy hunting grounds of his fathers."

Then, as the tears streamed in torrents down the face of his companions, Little Arrow breathed his last.

It was a sad moment. It was a bitter ending of a bright life—a sad termination of the happy expedition.

Still and rigid lay the dead form of Little Arrow. Silently weeping, his young friends knelt by it.

None felt keener pain than Harry Mains. In life they had been rivals, in death they were certainly friends.

He murmured a heartbroken prayer over the body of the Indian boy. Then, sadly, preparations were made for the return to the fort.

It was, of course, out of question to continue the hunt further.

It was decided not to bury Little Arrow there. Far better make his last resting place by the fort, where a suitable memorial could be erected.

So his body was reverently lifted into the canoe.

Then the canoe pushed out from the shore.

That was a sad return trip to the fort, but it was finally over.

The sad news created great depression in the settlement. Red Eagle and the big chiefs of the Assiniboinés took charge of the remains to inter them in their own peculiar fashion.

The Assiniboinés were plunged into great sorrow over the loss of Little Arrow.

Dances of mourning and processions of sorrow were held, and finally Little Arrow was buried in sight of the fort, upon an eminence from whence a fine view of the wide, spreading river could be had.

The affair created much depression at the fort for some days.

All of the young folks of the settlement visited the grave and laid floral offerings upon it. Not for many a day would the memory of Little Arrow be forgotten.

But other matters of a desperate nature began speedily to attract the attention of the settlers.

Now to the fort came a thrilling report.

Kit Carson had been doing some scouting, and brought in the startling intelligence which threw the garrison into a state of much worriment and fear.

This was that the Blackfeet nation had concerted a powerful attack upon the settlement.

They were resolved to sweep the settlement out of existence. This had come to Kit Carson's ears just in time.

Already the scouts and spies of the Blackfeet were swarming in the forest, and at any hour they might expect a bloody attack.

In view of all this Col. True had been at work upon the fortifications.

They were strengthened greatly, and a couple of new cannon were set in place. A new stockade was built to that end toward the town.

At night picket lines were established in the woods beyond the town. Every possible precaution was adopted.

Flatboats were moored at the river bank near the fort, with high sides built around their decks and long sweep oars.

These were intended as a dernier resort and avenue of escape, in case the fort was carried by the foe.

Mothers kept their children carefully in sight, the woodsmen were cautious about venturing into the forest, and matters were all in abeyance.

A crisis seemed certainly at hand, and all waited for it with something like a peculiar dread.

A dark cloud hung over the devoted little border settlement, and what its breaking would bring few could really tell.

CHAPTER XVI.

THE BLOW COMES.

The boy pards, Allan and Harry, found their time well occupied these days.

It was with not a little excitement that the boys awaited the coming of the storm.

Upon that result was plainly to depend the future of Fort True.

If the Blackfeet were repulsed this time, it was doubtful if they would ever be able to mass a force against the fort again.

So victory was plainly the most essential thing. Col. True was determined to have it.

But time passed on.

The Blackfeet, if they had any idea of attacking the fort, certainly made no outward demonstration.

The news brought in by the scouts was meagre.

Apparently all was quiet. But this was on the surface, and Kit Carson knew the Indian nature well enough to refuse to trust to such an appearance.

But, as is always the case, there were a few disaffected spirits.

A certain number of the settlers were disgruntled because they were unable to get at their work in the forest.

The summer had slipped by, they said, and here it was autumn.

They had done nothing but fight Indians, and they were tired of it. Nothing like reason would they listen to.

They affected not to believe in the report of the presence of savages in the vicinity.

Thus they argued. It is all false alarm and somebody's cock and bull story."

Thus they argued. In vain Kit Carson tried to argue with them.

"Ther crash will come when ye ain't lookin' fer it!" declared the trapper. "Ye won't be ready, an' ye'll be snuffed out like a taller candle."

But the woodsmen would not listen, and finally a number of them ventured to disregard the warning.

They went into the woods to work felling trees.

For two days they worked safely enough. Each night they came home boastfully.

But the third day as they were swinging their axes and singing their bluff songs, there was a crash of firearms, and four of their number fell.

Every tree in the forest seemed to shelter an Indian.

Every bush seemed to hold one. They came on in numbers, like the leaves on the trees, and with a quickness that was irresistible.

Nothing could stand before them.

The woodsmen were shot down, not one of them escaping. Like the waves of the sea, the foe swept on.

The alarm reached the fort tardily. At once terrible excitement was created.

The settlers' families began to rush at once for the stockade. Armed men were stationed at the upper end of the village.

The boy pards, Harry and Allan, had been fishing upon the river bank just below the fort.

They heard the fusillade of firearms, and were at once tremendously excited.

"It has come, Hal!" cried Allan, leaping to his feet.

"Let us get back to the fort!"

"If we don't we're lost!"

With all speed the boys rushed to the fort. They ran as if upon the wings of the wind.

At the entrance to the village they saw the armed band of settlers.

From the woods came pouring the band of savages. With whoops and yells they came on.

"Quick, Hal!" cried Allan. "We've got to make it or die!"

This was true.

They were now between two fires. But now a stentorian shout came from the men behind the cloud of gunpowder smoke.

It was Kit Carson's.

"Boys, git down!" he shouted. "Fer yer life git down!"

The two young pioneers understood the meaning well.

Bullets were flying about them. Not twenty feet distant were the savages. One of them with a bow in his hand and a tomahawk in his belt was almost upon them.

"Down, boys! Down!" came again the thunder of that voice.

Down they went upon their hands and knees, creeping toward the stockade. Bullets and arrows were flying above them. Just above in the clearing smoke they saw a tall form with a rifle at his shoulder. It was Kit Carson.

The big trapper had fired at the redskin in the rear. With a piercing death yell he threw up his arms and fell.

Indians were falling and some running, while the boys still crept toward the goal.

What saved them they were never able to tell. It seemed little short of a miracle.

But they reached the stockade in safety. There were shot holes in Harry's blouse, but he was uninjured.

But now the storm of the battle raged fiercer than ever.

Up to the very gates of the fort the yelling horde came. Like heroes the settlers fought.

Twice it was brought hand to hand upon the stockade.

That was a critical moment.

Had the red foe once succeeded in getting a foothold in the fort all would have been lost.

None knew this better than Kit Carson. The big trapper was a host in himself.

Everywhere in the thickest of the fight, he seemed to bear a charmed life.

His powerful voice shouted directions and encouragement. Wherever he came face to face with Blackfeet his powerful arm struck them down.

And thus the battle went on.

Col. True had been twice wounded. Dead and dying men were everywhere.

Harry and Allan, side by side, loaded and fired their rifles.

Time passed, and yet the battle raged. Kit Carson had one hope.

Night was at hand. If the foe could be held off until darkness came, a needed respite would be gained.

The savages would not be likely to continue the fight after dark. With a night's rest the stockades would be strengthened and the cannons, which had been useless because they pointed riverward, brought into play.

The Assiniboines had fought like heroes alongside their white allies.

"If we kin only hold ther varmints off a while longer," said Kit to Col. True during a lull in the battle, "I reckon we kin fool 'em yet."

"God grant that we may," said the fort's commandant, earnestly.

Darkness now rapidly shut down over the scene. It for a time made it all the more horrid.

The dark demon-like forms of the savages in the light of the blazing gunpowder, made the scene hideous indeed. It required nerve to face it.

But, as Kit had fancied, the coming of night put an end to the battle for a time.

Slowly the Indian foe withdrew to a safe distance.

Occasional shots were fired, but the main conflict was over. The demons now amused themselves firing the cabins outside the stockade.

Altogether it was a terrifying scene which those in the fort looked out upon. Words cannot express it.

The border men rested upon their arms. But, though thus far the victory was with them, the end was not yet.

They looked forward to the uncertain morrow. What would it bring forth? Would it be victory, or death and ashes? All was uncertainty and terror.

CHAPTER XVII.

LITTLE ALICE MISSING.

The Indian horde encamped without the stockade, waiting only for daylight to continue their attack.

But Kit Carson was not idle. He knew the importance of making use of the cannon.

"If we can switch them around and bring 'em tew bear on ther skunks we kin whip 'em," he declared.

Accordingly, work was at once begun, and many willing hands were engaged in the task.

While the strong men of the garrison were thus engaged, the boy parads were formulating new and thrilling plans.

"I tell you, Harry," said Allan, "I have a plan. Let us take a little scouting trip outside the stockade and see if we can't find out something."

The boys were enthused with the idea.

Armed and equipped, they met half an hour later in an embrasure of the fort upon the river side.

As the boys passed into the gloom the light of the block-house yard, made vivid by the watch-fires, was left behind them.

In this circle of light the settlers' wives and the children were huddled, waiting for the coming of the dawn and the assurance that they were safe from the deadly danger which menaced them.

In the group was Myrtle and little Alice True.

The child had seen the two boys vanish in the gloom, and she glanced wistfully after them. The child's mind did not fully embrace the enormity of the peril which hung over the settlement.

Therefore, it was quite natural that as she saw the boys

disappear she fancied that they were going upon a canoe trip, and her childish desire was at once aroused to go with them.

"Alice go too!" she said eagerly, breaking unobserved from the group.

She scampered into the gloom and was just in time to see the dim forms of the two boys vanish through the embrasure.

"Alice catch 'em!" she cried gleefully. "Me go too!"

She reached the embrasure and crept through it. Down the grassy slope she climped with wondrous skill.

There was a black patch of woods intervening to the river bank. But Alice knew the path and vanished in the gloom with the firm belief that she was able to overtake the boys.

Meanwhile, Allan and Harry, upon passing through the embrasure, had turned in almost an exactly opposite direction.

Cautiously they passed on around the angle of the stockade. There was a sentry above, but the gloom was too thick for the boys' forms to be observed.

This very fact impressed them with a peculiar sense of fear and of danger.

"Upon my word," muttered Harry, "what on earth is to prevent their springing a surprise upon the fort? The Blackfeet could creep here and actually invade the stockade."

"You are right!" said Allan, in a troubled manner. "Ought we not to go back and see that this is guarded against?"

"It will spoil our scouting trip," said Harry. "Let us take a look about first. There seems to be no immediate danger. We can look out for that later."

This was decided upon, and the boys plunged deeper into the gloom. Soon they had reached a point upon the wooded shore some distance from the fort.

The light from the stockade was now reflected against the dark sky, and by it the boys saw several dark forms upon the stockade and clearly outlined against the sky.

Their position at that moment was in the shadow of a dark copse, not twenty feet from the swirling current of the river.

"Heavens!" exclaimed Allan True, with a shiver. "What a foolish thing for them to do. They are an easy target for anyone here below!"

The words had barely left his lips when there was a sharp click and a report, and one of the white settlers upon the stockade was seen to throw up his arms and fall. The others then vanished.

"This is dreadful!" said Harry. "But we have got to look out for ourselves now, Allan. The foe are all about us."

They remained perfectly quiet for a moment in the copse.

They could hear and almost feel dusky forms moving about them. They would gladly have moved away, but it would have been impossible to have done so and remain undiscovered.

Suddenly a volcanic burst of flame leaped from one of the embrasures of the fort.

There was a thunderous roar, and a cannon ball came tearing down into the copse. The defenders of the stockade had brought a cannon to bear upon the spot.

Of course, to remain longer in the copse was not consistent with safety.

The boys realized this well enough. But what was to be done

Both laid flat in a little hollow in the ground.

"Perhaps we will escape getting hit by lying flat on the ground!" said Harry. "We can trust to luck."

"It seems to be our only course!" agreed Allan, in a whisper. "Ah! I believe our red neighbors are getting out."

This was true. The savages had a wholesome fear of the cannon, which now sent showers of hot shot down into the copse. It was a living wonder that the boy parads were not killed.

The savages got out in a hurry. They dived beneath the river bank, and in the dim light the boys could see them there.

They proceeded to make their way up the river under the cover of the high bank.

The boys noted this with interest. They needed no hint to apprise them of the fact that the savages intended an attack upon the stockades from the river side. They remembered with a thrill of alarm that that side of the fort was almost unguarded.

The cannonade had now ceased, and as the Blackfeet had departed the boys felt safer to move about.

It was necessary to warn the garrison of the intended attack. Could they succeed in doing this their scouting trip would not have been in vain.

In the gloom they stood the risk of being taken for savages and shot down. This fact was an unpleasant one.

But if they could cut off the Indians and reach that part of the fort from which they had emerged they might gain their ends.

With all haste they set out across the neck of land. Fortunately this was covered with a low growth of ferns through which they were able to creep silently and unseen.

When they had crossed this strip they were satisfied that they were now fully one hundred yards ahead of the savages.

The grassy ramparts were now reached. The boys made for the embrasure, but suddenly there was an ominous click, and a sharp voice said:

"Halt! Who goes there?"

Allan recognized the sentry's voice, and answered:

"It's all right, Mr. Farley. The Blackfeet are coming along the river bank to make an attack on this side of the fort. They are not two hundred yards below here now. Call every man to this part of the fort!"

"Great guns!" gasped Farley. "And to think we moved them cannon away from hyar just now. Well, well! I'll give the alarm!"

With which he placed a horn to his mouth and blew a loud blast. It was the alarm agreed upon, and the result was thrilling. In an instant the whole garrison was flocking to the spot.

The most intense excitement reigned.

Col. True and Kit Carson were among the first upon the spot.

As soon as they learned from the boys how matters were, Kit Carson, in his bluff manner, cried:

"Waal, by jingo! I must give these lads credit fer good clean grit. Thar's not many of us here could have done what thay have done, an' cum back with our ha'r on. That's what!"

The boys felt mighty proud of this rough compliment. But there was little time for further talk.

The Blackfeet were coming up the slope now in a swarm. They tried to carry that wing of the fort by storm, which was a most unusual thing for a savage.

For a time the battle waxed hot and furious at the embrasure. A number of times the stockade was on fire, and once the savages actually forced an entrance.

But each time they were driven back by superhuman effort, and the flames extinguished.

Finally they withdraw, leaving many dead and dying upon the ground. It was another signal victory for the settlers.

Of course an ovation followed. The settlers were overjoyed over their victory, and felt sure that the backbone of the Blackfeet war was broken.

But right in the midst of the general joy there came a depressing incident.

Mrs. True, the commandant's wife, was rushing about like an insane person, tearing her hair and shrieking wildly. Myrtle also was distraught, and Col. True was pallid and rigid as marble.

"What is the matter?" was first query.

Then the awful truth was known. Little Alice, for the second time, had been stolen away. At least, so it was believed.

No trace of her could be found in the fort. Every nook and corner, every available crevice was searched.

The garrison was thrown into a state of utter horror and consternation. The disappearance of little Alice was a profound mystery.

At once measures were resorted to to learn her fate. A hundred volunteers were on hand to make a sally and attack the foe in the open.

But suddenly across the murky sky there burst an awful thunder peal. Vivid lightning for some time played havoc in the darkness, and then it was as if the flood gates of heaven were let loose.

The storm had come, and for a time it raged with bitter fury.

CHAPTER XVIII.

ALICE'S TRACKS DISCOVERED.

At length the storm passed away. With its ending the gray light of dawn began to appear in the east.

Daylight was at hand. A scouting party was organized and ventured from the fort.

Kit Carson led it, but to the surprise of the settlers, nothing was to be seen of the Blackfeet anywhere.

Careful reconnoitering showed that they had certainly decamped from the vicinity.

The joyful news could hardly be believed by the garrison. The repulse of the night before had disheartened the savages.

The Assiniboine runners came in with startling reports that the Blackfeet were returning en masse to the upper reservation near the territorial line.

This would seem to indicate that they had abandoned the war for a time, if not forever.

In one sense this was joyful news to the settlers.

But, on the other hand, what of little Alice True? If she was indeed in the power of the Blackfeet, it was necessary to at once give pursuit.

A pursuit party was quickly organized. Kit Carson had volunteered to lead it, and Col. True was to lead another.

Of course, enough men were to be left in the fort to defend it. But everybody was interested in the search for little Alice.

Harry Mains had done his best to comfort Myrtle.

"If it is the power of human beings to rescue your sister, I will do it!" he said, resolutely.

Then he went in quest of Allan. But to his surprise he could not be found anywhere.

Inquiry did not result in learning his whereabouts. Then it was remembered that he had been missing since the report of little Alice's disappearance.

At last one man was found who remembered seeing him in company with the old Assiniboine chief, Black Dog.

This was the last seen of him. It was natural to presume that he had gone with Black Dog upon the quest.

"That is queer!" thought Harry. "Why did he not wait for me?"

But Harry was resolved to participate in the quest just the same.

Accordingly, when the party of settlers, fully one hundred in number, and mounted, rode out of the stockade, Harry was with them.

Kit Carson led the way, and through the vast forest they picked their way. Around Tall Butte they went, and finally came upon the Blackfeet camp. To their surprise the latter offered no resistance.

They fled in wild confusion, leaving their camp effects behind them. The victorious whites took possession of them.

A Blackfeet warrior was captured, and from him was wrung a positive statement that the little white girl was not in the possession of Black Thunder or his band.

This announcement only served to intensify the mystery. What was to be done?

This was not an easy thing to decide. But Kit Carson was not to be beaten.

The pursuit of the Blackfeet was abandoned. The party divided and spread through the woods.

The sagacity of Kit Carson had hit upon the right idea, that the child might have strayed into the woods by herself and got lost.

Thoroughly the woods were beaten around the base of Tall Butte. Even unto the river's edge went the searching party.

Gradually the party drew nearer the vicinity of the fort.

And now suddenly one of the Indian trailers startled the others with a great cry.

He bent down and examined the ground carefully at the foot of a mighty sycamore. The ground was soggy and wet, and there in the wet mass of leaves was an imprint.

Cleverly the keen-eyed savage traced the outline of the child's form.

"White girl lay down here," he declared. "Lay long time. Somebody come, two men take her away. Trail go dat way."

It seemed easy to understand the exact situation now. Undoubtedly the child had wandered into the woods, and getting lost had sank down at the foot of the sycamore and fallen asleep.

"Waal," said Kit Carson, tersely, "what do ye make of it, Injun?"

The Assiniboine shook his head.

"Go away in canoe," he said. "Go down river, mebbe to fort."

"I've got it!" cried Harry Mains, excitedly. "I'll bet

at little Alice has been found by some of the others and taken home. Perhaps by Allan and Black Dog."

The Assiniboine trailer seemed to confirm this theory.

"Yes," he said earnestly. "One white man, one Injun; Abbe Assiniboine."

"That settles it," cried Harry. "We'll surely find them at the fort."

A great cheer went up.

"On to the fort!"

Away dashed the cavalcade. Striking into a wood path, it did not take them long to reach the open clearing. The fort was in view.

Up to the gates they rode, and into the stockade. In a moment everybody crowded about them.

"Well," cried David Mains, who had been left in charge, "have ye found the little one?"

"Found her?" roared Kit Carson. "Do ye mean to tell us she ain't here?"

"Here?" exclaimed Mains, in wonderment.

Then he stopped. Everybody gazed toward the shore. A light canoe had glided into view, and from it sprang a tall, powerful savage. In the canoe sat Allan True with happy face.

Up the slope came Black Dog, with the form of little Alice dripping wet in his arms. It was known in a moment that the rescue was made.

A great cheer went up. In a few moments the lost child was in its mother's arms. It was a moment of supreme joy.

Harry had rushed down to meet his pal, but at that moment a terrible thing happened.

A puff of smoke came from a fringe of foliage across the river, a sharp report, and Allan in the canoe pitched forward upon his face.

CHAPTER XIX.

PREPARING FOR WINTER.

It was with an awful thrill of horror that all had witnessed the mishap which had befallen Allan.

Whoever had fired the dastardly shot from the opposite bank of the river did not show himself or fire again.

In a moment Harry was by the canoe and dragged it out of the way.

Allan lay in the bottom, white and senseless. There was a red streak of blood across his forehead.

"Oh, my heavens!" wailed Harry, "he is killed! Oh, this is awful!"

In a moment Kit Carson, Col. True and all the others were upon the spot.

Black Dog had placed little Alice in her mother's arms and then had started back for the canoe.

The quick eye of the chief had seen the puff of smoke, and he realized in the flash of time what it meant.

He knew instinctively that it had been fired by some prowling Blackfoot. Quick as a flash, he raised his rifle and fired.

There was an unearthly yell, and a dusky form leaped from the foliage and went tumbling down to the water's edge. Allan's hurt was avenged.

Meanwhile Allan had been taken ashore, and now lay at full length upon the green sward.

It was then learned that his wound was only a slight one.

In a short while Allan was so far recovered as to be able to get about nicely. He came in for general congratulations.

Then he related his adventures with Black Dog, and how he had found Alice half insensible at the foot of the tree.

The child had wandered about until she had got completely worn out. Then she had given up to what would have been a death slumber.

The joy of the settlers was intense at the outcome of the affair.

It certainly looked now as if the settlement was to see better days.

The Blackfeet had been badly repulsed and were in full retreat. The Assiniboines all declared that Black Thunder would never return to make another attack.

There was no time to lose in making ready for the winter.

The cabins were tightly chinked and plastered, and in many cases banks of earth heaped up against them.

All fear of the Blackfeet had now vanished. There was nothing to fear. They had departed for their winter quarters, and no further trouble with them need be apprehended.

Even the Assiniboines had begun to prepare for the winter.

Their teepees were closely grouped and tightened with new skins.

Buffalo and bear skins were brought in in great quantities and made into robes and garments of various sorts.

The Indian is singularly improvident in summer, but bitter experience has taught him to prepare for winter.

The dark cloud had seemed to roll away at last, and the spirits of all in the community were high.

Life began to take on a brighter aspect.

Everybody was keenly interested in making a home on the border.

There were no sloths in Fort Point settlement. Every man, woman and child worked from morning until night.

It is needless to say that these were happy hours for the boy parads, Allan and Harry.

Considerable corn and wheat had been raised despite the Indian war.

The new rich land had borne prolifically and goodly harvest was made. A windmill had been constructed by a genius of the party who hailed from Holland, and a goodly grist was ground.

The last big buffalo hunt was over and toothsome hams hung in the smokehouse by hundreds. There was enough and more to supply twice the number of people for the winter.

But it is well that ample provision was made.

For about this time up the river came a couple of flat-boats, bringing a score of new settlers.

December was ushered in with howling blasts and a big snowstorm.

The thickest of furs became none too warm, and the settlers were content to remain in cover except when it was necessary to go out.

The river was frozen solid. Its smooth surface made good skating, and fishing through the ice resulted in fabulous catches of splendid Yellowstone trout.

Before the winter was over, however, there were thrilling experiences to relieve any feeling of monotony that might exist.

The Assiniboines brought in an exciting report of a vengeful black panther, which roamed in a certain part of the forest, and which no hunter had yet succeeded in bringing down.

Indeed, the savage beast had rather the best of all such attempts, and two of the Assiniboine hunters had fallen victims to its attacks and had been literally torn to pieces.

A sort of terrorism now entered the settlement.

Even strong men felt timorous at entering the woods alone, and unless heavily armed.

Thus affairs were when a hue and cry was raised to make a general hunt for and destroy the panther.

CHAPTER XX.

HUNTING THE PANTHER.

The move was a popular one. It required but little effort to inaugurate a committee of procedure.

A party was at once formed to hunt the black panther down.

The boys entered into the spirit of the thing with all due enthusiasm. They were determined to participate.

All the great hunters of the settlement got together and laid out a plan of action.

Several parties were organized and a route laid out for each.

None were to proceed in the same direction. A different course was laid out for each.

As soon as the boys found when they were going to start they were not long in getting ready.

Without saying a word to anybody, Harry and Allan and the Indian chief, Black Dog, set out over the snowdrifts on their snowshoes.

In many places the snow was six feet deep, so it may be imagined that the boys could not proceed very rapidly with their snowshoes.

For hours they kept on.

Then darkness began to shut down. But Black Dog had camped too many such nights in the woods not to know what to do.

An overhanging shelf of rock was found. Under this they crept, and found a quantity of leaves which were comparatively dry.

Hemlock boughs were cut in great heaps, and a brisk little campfire made. Dried meat and biscuits formed the evening meal.

With the first break of day they were astir again.

Once more through the woods they marched. Mile after mile passed by, and at length, in a little wooded vale, Black Dog paused and bent down over marks in the snow.

"What is it?" asked Harry, with interest.

The old chief chuckled.

"I am on trail of panther," he replied.

The two boys experienced a thrill. It seemed a critical moment to them.

The chief again examined the trail, and then looked to the priming of his gun.

"White boy stay here!" he said. "Black Dog go up mountain and find panther. Mebbe come down here for white boys to shoot. See?"

The chief glided off over the snow, and was soon lost from sight among the fir trees.

The boys waited a long while in the snowy dell, but heard nothing from Black Dog.

Finally Harry looked up the mountain side, and said:

"He ought to be in sight. But that grove of trees obstructs one's vision. Ah! I will just take a look over this way."

With this he left Allan a moment and went some yards away to a point from whence he could easily see the mountain side.

He was straining his gaze in vain, when the still and frosty air was suddenly broken by a cry from Allan, and the sharp report of a rifle.

Then through the vale there went out a shriek like that of a lost spirit. It was the awful cry of the panther.

Harry was completely dazed for a moment.

He saw his young pard start to retreat, and saw a long, sinewy, black body flying over the snow.

"The black panther!" he gasped, for the moment overcome with horror.

Then an awful sight was witnessed.

In an instant the panther was upon him. It was not a large animal, but ferocious, and possessed of terribly sharp teeth and claws.

His claws rent Allan's clothing, and his teeth were set with a fearful grip into the lad's arm.

It was certain that the animal would have torn Allan all to pieces but for the quick work of Harry.

The young settler had an ax in his belt and a hunting knife. He did not dare to use his rifle.

Drawing these from his belt, he rushed forward with deadly resolution. He aimed a blow at the panther with the ax.

Down came the blade upon the animal's skull. It cleft the bone and the battle was done. The black panther was dead. Harry Mains could hardly realize what he had done. In the whirl of the moment he thought only of his pard, and sat down by his side.

Blood dyed the white snow, and Harry saw by Allan's white face that he had fainted.

CHAPTER XXI.

CONCLUSION.

"Oh, Allan, speak to me!" wailed Harry, in horror and fear. "You are not dead! I will not have it so!"

A guttural voice sounded in his rear.

"White boy hurt! So! let Black Dog help him. Me see."

It was the old Assiniboine chief, and he knelt down solicitously by the wounded lad. He had come down from the mountain just in time to witness the last of the scene.

Quickly Black Dog turned Allen upon his back.

As he did so the young hunter opened his eyes and looked up with a smile.

"I am all right," he said, huskily. "It hurt me a bit, though."

"Oh, Allan!" cried Harry, joyfully; "you are not dead! Heaven be praised!"

"Of course I ain't dead!" retorted Allan. "Somebody pull off my coat. I think the critter bit my arm."

It is needless to say that the coat was quickly removed. Then the wound was examined and dressed.

Allan would have to carry his arm in a sling for some time, but what cared he for that? The boy parads were the proudest boys in North America, for they had slain the black panther.

The old chief looked pleased with the turn of events, but withal there was a troubled light in his eyes.

"What is the matter, Black Dog?"

The old chief shook his head ominously and pointed to the northeast.

"No see way to get back to fort," he replied. "Heap big blizzard up there."

The boys exchanged startled glances.

"A blizzard!" both exclaimed.

They well knew what this meant. No more awful peril could have threatened them.

"What is to be done?" asked Allan, desperately.

All this time the Black Dog had been stripping off the panther's skin. He finished his task and arising, said:

"We meet blizzard. White boys come wif me."

The boys were only too glad to follow. They left the dell and followed the old chief on snowshoes for some distance.

This brought them eventually to a high mound of broken granite right in the heart of the woods.

Trees, birches and sycamores grew out of the crevices in the ledge, and snow was drifted there also.

But Black Dog here paused and lifted a screen of low growing hemlock boughs.

"Ugh!" he ejaculated, pointing beyond. The boys saw a low roofed opening under the broken granite.

It was dark and forbidding against the white snow. For a moment the boys shrank from entering.

Black Dog saw and understood their fear. At once he took his hunting knife in his teeth, saying:

"White boys follow Black Dog. No fear. Once this den of panther. Black Dog kill him long ago. No danger now. Stay here till blizzard over."

This settled it.

The boys were not so foolish as to refuse. They knew well enough that the old Indian was right.

The blizzard was certainly something to be dreaded.

So they followed him into the disused panther's den. The opening was narrow enough, but upon gaining the inside they were overjoyed and relieved to find that it was a large and commodious cavern.

Black Dog went out and brought in some hemlock boughs.

There was a great pile of old fagots and refuse wood in the place. A fire was made, the smoke finding its way out through crevices above.

And they were snug enough for the time.

Twenty-four hours the storm raged. Not in the history of the frontier had a worse one been known.

With high spirits they at once set out for the fort.

They met with a happy reception when they returned. Awful fears had been entertained by those in the fort, and a searching party had been organized.

The other hunters had succeeded in reaching the fort before the blizzard, not having traveled as far as the boys.

Of course they had seen nothing of the black panther. But when Allan and Harry produced the monster's skin they came in for a grand ovation.

From that time the boys felt that they had earned the right to manhood. Prosperity shone upon them, and both became foremost in the settlement.

There were great changes in the Fort Point settlement in the next few years.

The town itself enlarged to a dozen times its size. It became the most important trading post upon that part of the frontier.

Fortunes were made and lost. Among those lucky enough to keep what they made was the young and responsible firm of True & Mains.

For Harry and Allan continued to be parads in business as well as play, and they soon established for themselves a name for honor and integrity which was widespread.

And Harry Mains was made particularly happy, for Myrtle True, sweet and pure, became his happy wife.

The ceremony was celebrated in the old blockhouse, and Kit Carson came in from the farther frontier and danced with many of the old settlers at the wedding.

Long years of peace and happiness were promised all whom we have followed thus far. We have seen our brave boy parads through many a thrilling experience, and also how royally they succeeded in making a home on the border. Having done this, let us now beg leave to write.

Next week's issue will contain "THE TWENTY DOCTORS; OR, THE MYSTERY OF THE COAST."

INTERESTING ARTICLES

NEW MOBILE GUN FOR UNITED STATES ARMY.

The ordnance department of the army has designed a powerful new mobile gun which is to be built at the Watervliet arsenal, West Troy, N. Y. The gun, which is intended for caterpillar mount, is 194 millimeters (21 feet 6 inches) long, weighs twelve tons and has an approximate range of ten miles. The projectile weighs 175 pounds. Two of these guns will be built for testing at the Aberdeen proving grounds, Maryland.

CORNCOBS FOR FUEL.

The humble corncob has come into its own at last—the luxury class. City dwellers who use the corncob to “prime” their fire have found that, owing to the scarcity of the corn crop last fall, cobs have taken an airplane stunt in price. Harry Sanderson, a Geary County farmer, living near Junction City, Kan., one of the few men who had a good crop last fall, is making money hand over fist selling cobs. City people drive out to his farm, shovel the cobs into their wagon and pay him \$2 a load for them. The demand far exceeds the supply.

FROGS IN SPIGOTS.

Residents of Clarkston, Wash., have appealed to State Fish Commissioner L. H. Darwin for some relief from a visitation of frogs. It seems the frogs have taken to joy riding through the town's water mains. People are greeted with the sprightly chirp of frogs when they draw their morning glass of water, and before venturing to take a bath the cautious resident listens for the song of the unbidden guest before taking a plunge. Darwin recommends that bass and pickerel, the natural enemies of frogs, be turned loose in the town's reservoir.

DOG A WITNESS.

Trixie, a collie dog, was a witness for her mistress recently in Common Pleas Court No. 5, Philadelphia, Pa., in the trial of the suit of Mrs. Helen Butkus, who claimed to have been bitten by the dog, against Mrs. Mary A. Chambers, the dog's owner. According to Mrs. Butkus, she was attacked by Trixie on July 31, 1917, when she entered the vestibule of Mrs. Chambers' home to purchase some household effects. She testified that the dog bit her on the left thigh, causing tears and abrasions of the skin and flesh. Trixie's owner denied the dog had been guilty of such a violent temper and questioned the truth of the plaintiff's story. Mrs. Chambers admitted Trixie was a lively puppy, but good-tempered and a play-fellow for the children of the neighborhood.

To demonstrate the truth of this Trixie was brought into court and scampered about among the jurors, who later returned a verdict for the dog's owner.

ON A CAKE OF ICE IN A BATHING SUIT.

When most people sit by the fireside recalling the “good old summertime” William Pilz, of Chicago, floats around Lake Michigan on a cake of ice, clad in a bathing suit.

Recently Pilz set out for his icy plunge armed with a hatchet and a bathrobe. Chopping a man's sized bathtub in the foot-thick ice Pilz plunged in—disporting like a polar bear for some time.

It was easy sliding into the water, but getting out was a different matter entirely. Try as he would, Pilz could not get a solid footing on the slippery sides of his bathtub. After repeated attempts, all hending in a “shoot the chute” back into the icy water, Pilz summoned aid. Securely planting his arctic-clad feet on the ice, his rescuer yanked Pilz from the water.

“Enjoyed the water immensely,” said Pilz, “but couldn't get out. Thanks, very much, old man,” and snuggling comfortably into his bathrobe the Chicago human polar bear beat it for his comfy fireside.

LIGHT WOODS.

The best known of the lighter than cork woods is the balsa variety, the lightness of which was jovially demonstrated by a yacht club, which, by way of novel invitation to an “affair,” sent out postal cards made of balsa wood. The cards were almost as long and wide as a cigar box and about a quarter of an inch thick, and went through the mail with a 1-cent stamp.

Balsa in the Ibero-American countries means a raft, for which vessels the light wood has extensively been used throughout the southern parts of this hemisphere. Balsa wood is about one-half the weight of cork and looks like poplar. Its strength is considerable, a moderate sized plank being able to support the weight of several men. Its use in these parts lies mostly in the future. Tests are being made for its use in aircraft, life buoys, etc.

The balsa is a luxuriant tropical plant of rapid growth. It occurs generally south of the Rio Grande. Four or five years suffices a shoot to attain the proportions of a tree 50 or 60 feet high and 12 or 14 inches in diameter.

A lighter wood than balsa is the sola pith wood in India. It is a fourth the weight of cork. A Mongol type of pith wood is one-eighth as heavy as cork. But these do not seem of any particular utility.

GOOD READING

CADETS ALL IN DEBT, SAYS WEST POINT

The cadet at West Point in these high cost of living days cannot keep out of debt on his pay, according to the annual report of Colonel Tillman, the superintendent, recently made public. It costs \$1 a day to board a cadet and Uncle Sam allows only 40 cents. Besides this subsistence allowance the cadet gets \$600 a year. This now barely meets cost of uniforms and laundry. On March 31, 1917, the three classes then at West Point were \$75,844.33 in debt.

BARBERS VICTIMS.

Some one played a joke on the four barbers of Berea, a suburb of Cleveland, Ohio, a joke they do not relish. Haircuts went to 40 cents there recently and shaves to 20 cents. Then posters appeared announcing that a new shop would open which would cut these prices to 30 and 15 cents. The four old stands promptly announced a cut to 25 and 10 cents, effective the day of the opening of the new shop. The day the new place was to have opened two clothing dummies appeared in its window with a sign around their necks: "We had lots of fun. Did the other four?" The prices are still 40 and 20 cents.

BATTLE WITH APES.

The patrons of the Wigwam theater witnessed an exciting battle in San Francisco some years ago and it was not down on the programme. It was a fight in which a man and woman did battle for their lives against a couple of monster apes, and it was only by the courage and presence of mind of some ten attaches of the theater that the enraged brutes were prevented from killing both people.

Part of the evening's entertainment was furnished by Prof. Samwells' troupe of trained animals, consisting of goats, dogs, cats and five large apes. Samwells handled the animals himself while on the stage. His wife and their assistants remained in the wings, ready to take charge of the animals as they went off the stage.

The monkeys were kept in a large cage, and this had always been looked after by Mrs. Samwells, she taking the animals out and returning them to the cage when her husband was through with them. During the last part of the performance the largest ape was dressed like a lady and rode about the stage in a little phaeton drawn by one of the dogs. When the ape was sent on the stage by Mrs. Samwells it was rather sullen and at first refused to get into the vehicle. It showed its teeth every time its master approached, but was at last induced to take its seat in the phaeton.

The professor patted it on the head and then stooped to adjust the harness on the canine steed. Then, quick as a flash, the cunning brute sprang from the vehicle and fastened its long tusks in his wrist, driving them clear to the bone. In an instant the house was in an uproar, women screamed and strong men turned their heads aside as the maddened brute bit and tore at the man's arm, while his screams for help ran through the building.

"Grace! Grace! Take him off! He is killing me!" shouted Samwells to his wife. Mrs. Samwells, who was holding another huge ape in her arms, threw the animal from her and rushed on the stage to her husband's assistance. She seized the big ape by the throat and tried with all her strength to choke the beast in order to open its jaws, but she might as well have tried to strangle a Bengal tiger.

She then did what few men would have done—thrust her hand into the brute's mouth and by a superhuman effort wrenched the terrible jaws apart. It was just at this instant that the ape which Mrs. Samwells had left in the wing sprang on the stage, as if to the assistance of its comrade. There was a cry of "Look out for the other one!" and the next instant the newcomer had seized the woman by the left hand and driven its sharp teeth clear through it. Samwells, now free from the grasp of the first monster, rushed to aid his wife, but he could render but little assistance, as both his hands were almost torn to pieces.

At this moment several men rushed on the stage and the fierce brutes were beaten into insensibility with clubs and pieces of board torn from the scenery. The victims were carried from the stage and as soon as the patrol wagon arrived were taken to the receiving hospital.

Dr. Simpson, who was in attendance, found that the man's left thumb was almost torn from the hand. The tendons were completely severed and there were a dozen wounds, reaching from the tips of the fingers far up on the wrist. The wounds made by the animals' teeth looked as if they had been inflicted by a tiger, so badly was the flesh torn and lacerated. Every one of the wounds had to be sewed up, and after this was done and the dressing applied Mrs. Samwells was attended to. She was not nearly so badly injured as her husband.

Mrs. Samwells said that this was the second time the same brute had attacked her husband. They were showing in San Jose on Thanksgiving Day, and after the street parade the brute sprang at Samwells while he was undressing it and tore his right hand in a fearful manner. The injury was not properly attended to and blood poisoning set in. It was only by calling in the best surgical aid in the city that his life was saved.

FROM ALL POINTS

HEATING RIVETS ELECTRICALLY.

With the employment of women in many forms of work heretofore considered too heavy for them it has been necessary to modify the equipment and form of work in numerous instances. Such a case is the heating of rivets by electricity in charge of women. Instead of portable, sooty forges operated by turning a heavy crank there has been introduced an electrically-heated forge which is clean, simple to operate and readily portable. It will heat a standard rivet in 30 seconds.

WITH HELD HUSBAND PRISONER WITH GUN.

Declaring that his wife had "abducted him, marched him through the streets with her hand on a revolver hidden in a hand-bag, and held him a prisoner at the point of a weapon for three days and nights in an apartment in West Baker street," F. R. Campbell, a railroad engineer, has asked the Municipal Court of Atlanta, Ga., for a peace warrant against his alleged belligerent spouse. Asked by an attorney why he did not take the pistol away from his wife, Campbell said:

"Simply because she's a better man than I am." And the lawyer reddened when Campbell added: "I'd like to see you try to take a pistol away from her."

A \$200 peace bond was ordered.

SUGAR BEETS SOAR \$5 A TON.

Sugar beet growers are contracting their 1919 crop of beets for delivery at \$10 a ton, a price which is from \$3.50 to \$5 a ton higher than pre-war figures. According to a representative of the United States Department of Agriculture, who recently returned from an extensive trip through the sugar beet areas of the United States, the prospects for the 1919 crop are excellent. An acreage increase of from 20 to 25 per cent over the plantings of last year is indicated.

The United States consumes about 4,000,000 tons of sugar a year under normal conditions, and of this amount approximately 1,000,000 tons, consisting of both beet and cane sugar, are of domestic production.

THE 14-GUN AGINCOURT NOT POPULAR.

The British battleship Agincourt, formerly the Rio de Janeiro, building for Brazil and taken over by the British when the war opened, is notable for the fact that she has no less than seven two-gun turrets, mounting a total of fourteen 12-inch guns

as her main battery. Her protection of nine inches of side armor is reinforced by three protective decks, 17 main bulkheads and 365 water-tight compartments. The ship, according to the Engineer, is a type quite alien to British naval ideas, which run just now to fewer guns of heavier caliber, and in spite of her formidable armament she is not a very popular ship.

150,000 SOLDIERS ATTENDING A. E. F. SCHOOLS.

Brig. Gen. Robert I. Rees, U. S. A., formerly in charge of the army activities at colleges, has complete supervision over the educational work of soldiers in the American Expeditionary Force in France and Germany. The matter of arranging the curriculum and determining the number and location of the schools is entirely within the control of General Rees. The latest reports received from the educational headquarters in France show that 150,000 men are now enrolled in the various schools established by the A. E. F. The courses include agricultural and engineering branches as well as the arts and sciences. Reports indicate that nearly 15,000 men are in attendance at the American Army University at Beune, France, alone.

ANCIENT SHIP WONDER.

An ancient Syracusan ship—a Greek Mauretania—that carried vast cargoes and had a gymnasium, bath, lounge and gardens aboard, was described by Prof. W. S. Ferguson of Harvard in a lecture in Boston, Mass., on Greek economic development.

Prof. Ferguson gave a minute description of the great ship, the wonder of its time. He said it was of the three-deck type, with 20 banks of oars, that required one whole year in building and which was manned by a crew of 300 sailors, together with 600 marines. In its hold it could carry 110,000 bushels of wheat, wool, thousands of jars of salt fish and other foodstuffs. Its cabins were decorated with elaborate mosaics, one set of them picturing all of the Iliad. Its chambers included a gymnasium, a lounge with a "book shelf," a bath provided with 50 gallons of water, stalls for horses, "gardens" or conservatories, and, in addition to all these luxuries and necessities, it had equipment and engines of defense which gave it the character almost of a ship of war. In such achievements as these, the ship having been built at a time even when economic decay had begun to beset Greece, Prof. Ferguson said he could not avoid the conclusion that theories of Greek infantility in economic development found little support.

LUCKY JOE BROWN

—OR—

THE SMARTEST BOY IN NEW YORK

By J. P. RICHARDS

(A serial story)

CHAPTER IX (Continued).

"Near here?" asked Joe. "I know nothing of the city, remember."

"Where will you start from?"

"The Astor House, New York."

"Stopping there?"

"Yes, till I can get a better place."

"Rather swell for a boy like you, isn't it?"

"Possibly. I am not penniless, Mr. Ludlum."

"You are fortunate, and it is none of my business where you stay. Better take a Greenpoint car at the New York entrance of the Brooklyn Bridge. It will take you directly to South Ninth street. It is not the quickest way of getting there, but it is the most direct, and, for a stranger, the best."

Joe pulled right out.

He wondered what his new job was going to turn out to be.

He rather liked the idea of being a detective.

It gave promise of adventure. And then the pay!

Twenty-five per for a boy like him! He had never heard of such a thing.

"Why, if I get two weeks of it with board free I shall have fifty dollars clear," thought Joe.

He returned to the Astor House, determined to put in an hour or so in sleep, for although Mr. Ludlum had not said so, he had an idea that he might be expected to work all night.

When Joe reached the hotel the clerk handed him a card.

"This gentleman was inquiring for you," he said. "Pretty important person to be looking up a boy like you."

The name on the card was Mr. Edward Blakelee. On the back was scribbled in lead pencil:

"Sorry not to have seen you. If I can do anything for you at any time let me know.—E. B."

"Know who that man is?" demanded the clerk.

"Certainly," replied Joe. "He lives at No. — Fifth avenue."

"If that is all you know about him, then you know very little," said the clerk. "That man is our United States senator. He is one of the richest men in New York."

CHAPTER X.

JOE TURNS DETECTIVE.

Joe took his card and went up to his room.

There, you fool! Now will you forget that girl?"

he said to himself. "Senator Blakelee! I might have guessed."

And so he might, for the Senator's fame had extended even to Little Indian.

"Was there ever such luck?" thought Joe. "Here I have only been two days in New York, and I am bumping up against all kinds of queer things."

He put the card carefully away in his pocket-book.

But for the present he had no intention of calling on Senator Blakelee.

"He just wrote that as a matter of politeness," thought Joe. "If I was to chase him up he would be sure to turn me down."

Joe slept for three hours and awoke ready to make a night of it, if necessity required.

Promptly at nine o'clock he presented himself at the number on South Ninth street.

A faded looking woman opened the door.

"Mr. Ludlum has the front room on the next floor," she said. "I believe he is in. You can go right up."

Joe ascended the stairs and knocked on the door.

"Come in!" Mr. Ludlum's voice called.

Joe then entered the first bachelor's den he had ever seen.

It was most cosily furnished.

The walls were hung with pictures, queer weapons, strangely carved pipes and many other curiosities.

Every chair was an easy one. A cheerful grate fire burned under the mantel-piece.

Mr. Ludlum, in dressing-gown and slippers, leaned back, smoking a handsome meerschaum.

"Well, so you are on time!" he exclaimed. "That's the first point in your favor. Do you smoke?"

"No, sir," replied Joe.

"So? Sit down. Make yourself at home. We shan't be on the move for an hour or so yet. Hope you are not a sleepy-head. You probably won't get much sleep to-night."

"I thought as much," said Joe, dropping into a chair, "so I put in three hours' sleep this afternoon."

"Wise boy! You are certainly up to snuff. Had your supper?"

"Yes, sir."

"Then you came all cocked and primed. One question more: Can you play pinochle?"

"Yes, sir."

"That's the best thing you have said yet. Let's have a game."

And Joe played pinochle till half-past ten o'clock.

"Time is up," exclaimed Ludlum then. "Now, then, strip off all your clothes."

"Hello! What about that?" demanded Joe, in very natural surprise.

"Now, don't begin by asking questions," replied Ludlum. "You are here to do as you are told if you want to stand right with me."

(To be continued.)

AFTER BLACK DIAMONDS

—OR—

THE BOYS OF COAL SHAFT NO. 3

By WILLIAM WADE

(A Serial Story)

CHAPTER VIII.

ETTA SEES ROB NEWTON AT WORK.

"But he used to be one of your crowd before he went to work in the mine, and he could be yet!" retorted Jane.

"It's his own fault that he doesn't come and see us now, and because he doesn't run with our boys," said Tmily.

"I saw Harry to-day, and he said that he was talking with Bob Newton last night, and asked Bob why he didn't come out with the girls any more, and Bob Newton said that he was too busy with his studies nowadays," went on Jane.

"And you say he hasn't always worked in the mines?" asked Etta.

"No, he used to go to school with all of us. I remember when he used to sit with Will in the same seat, and he used to work half of Will's problems out for him," said Jane.

"How does it come that he is working in the mines now, then?"

"Why, his father died, and they found out then that he had gambled away all of his money and there wasn't anything left, and Bob had to do something to take care of his mother, so he started to mining."

The argument about Robert Newton stopped in a few moments when Etta announced that she had to be going home to take her presents to her guardy.

"By the way, Etta," said Jane as they were parting, "what do you say to a trip down in the mine? I've never been down, and Will has said a dozen times that he would take us down. Why not go now and see it? Will you go?"

Etta was more than anxious.

So the next day was agreed upon as the time for the trip into the mine to be made, and the girls parted until eleven o'clock the next morning.

"Why are you so anxious to go down in the mine?" asked Will while they were driving homeward. "There isn't anything to see."

"Then why do other people like to go down? There must be something to see if the men are digging coal. I've always heard so much about how they do it that I'd like to see them at work."

"But they won't allow you in where the men are working," said Will.

"Who won't? I'll see Guardy as soon as we get home and he'll let me see the men at work," and

the girl pursed up her lips in a pucker which told that she was going to have her own way about this.

Into the library of the Merlin home she rushed when they reached the grounds, and threw her arms about the old man.

"Guardy, I've brought you your present, and you'd better tell me it's pretty or I won't love you any more!" taking her arms away and perching on the side of his chair as she handed him a pair of cuff-links.

"Well, well, girlie, I should say they are pretty! Put your head down here and let me kiss you," as the old fellow reached an arm about her waist and touched his lips to hers.

"Now, Guardy, the girls want to go down in the mine to-morrow morning, and Will said he would take us down, but he says we can't see the men at work, and I don't see any fun of going if the men are not at work."

"Well, my dearie, you shall see them and how they dig. I'll go down with you girls in the morning and we'll see the whole thing."

"That's an old dear," as she threw her arms about the man's neck again. "I knew you would, you old sweetheart!"

The man turned again to his writing and the girl went to her room to sit down and think over the events of the day.

"Oh, Jane, Guardy's going down with us this morning!" exclaimed Etta, as she rushed into the arms of Jane the next morning at that girl's home. "He told me last night that he would go with us and that we'd see the men at work, and all that. Isn't he just the finest old dear of a Guardy?"

"Then Will's not going with us?" asked Jane.

"Yes, he's going, too, but he told me last night that we couldn't see the men at work, and so I went to Guardy and he said he'd go down with us and that we'd see everything."

With happy spirits the girls all started away from Jane's house, where it had been arranged that they meet, four of them, and they walked through town to the office of the coal mine of the Rocksbury Coal Company, having first called up Mr. Merlin and told him of their coming.

"Oh, ho! Look at Guardy!" exclaimed Etta, as she caught sight of the portly operator in a suit of old overalls, begrimed and stained by many visits into the mine.

Laughing and jollying they went over to the mouth of the shaft, where the signal was given to the engine to run more slowly, as passengers were going down.

They soon reached the bottom and the girls looked up a long black hallway, an entry, which stretched toward the west.

"What are all those lights?" asked Etta.

"Those are lamps like mine," answered the old man. "Bill, we'll take a place in your lead car and go with you," as he addressed one of the workmen in the entry.

(To be continued.)

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GOOD CURRENT NEWS ARTICLES

The Daily Mail reports that on September 22, last, direct wireless communication between Great Britain and Australia was established, when two messages from the premier and from Sir Joseph Cook were received by the Amalgamated Wireless Company of Australasia from the new station at Carnar. It is stated that the messages received at Sydney were perfectly clear and distinct, despite direct transmission over 12,000 miles.

The War Department has announced that the only distinction between service buttons to be granted soldiers upon discharge will be in the case of wounded men. All men who were wounded in action will receive silver buttons, and the others will receive bronze buttons. The discharge button is in the hands of the manufacturers and will soon be ready for distribution. The buttons will be issued to soldiers upon being discharged, and those who have already left the service may obtain them upon application to the adjutant general.

In order to raise the crest of the mammoth dam at Redfield, near Oswego, N. Y., the Salmon River Power Company will move the Redfield cemetery, in existence for 118 years, it has been announced. The task entails the moving of 1,300 bodies and hundreds of monuments. Redfield cemetery is one of the prettiest rural burying-grounds in the State. It is estimated the work will cost more than \$100,000. It is made necessary, as the raising of the dam would cause the water impounded there to back up to the village square and flood the graves. Engineers working on the project state that raising of the crest of the dam ten feet will give the power company millions of gallons of water daily for the development of electric power. Syracuse commercial interests will be ultimate consumers of the electricity generated.

Scores of canaries have been carried away from their cages lately by butcher-birds, who by the thousands have taken up their winter abode in the fastnesses of Sutro forest California. The butcher-bird is described as a first cousin to the hawk, is about one-quarter the size and possesses a predatory bill. It is his habit to circle high in the sky until his sharp eyes catch sight of a canary as it perches in a cage hung on some veranda. Then, when it is satisfied that its movements are not being watched, it swoops noiselessly down, thrusts its talons and hooked beak through the bars of the cage, pulls the luckless bird from its domicile and flies swiftly away with its prey. Sometimes the butcher-birds seem to be satisfied with the mere killing of the song-bird. The butcher-birds hibernate each winter in Sutro forest, but their number this year is greater than ever before. In the summer they fly to warmer climates.

GRINS AND CHUCKLES

Some one had left a button on the table in the restaurant in place of a tip. "Ah, well," philosophized the waiter, "everything comes to him who waits."

Freddie—Are you the trained nurse mamma said was coming? Nurse—Yes, dear, I'm the trained nurse. Freddie—Let's see some of your tricks, then!

Willie—Papa, is it swearing to talk about old socks being darned? Papa—No, my son. Why? Willie—'Cause I wish Johnny would keep his darned old socks out of my drawer.

Anning—Has Badders made a success of the stage? Manning—Yes. He acted the part of butler so well in a play last winter, that he got a place in a Fifth avenue family.

High Jinks—Help, help! Cool, help! Mr. Cool—What are you kicking up such a row about? High Jinks—Don't you see how I'm fixed? Mr. Cool—Yes, but I never saw you in a hole yet you couldn't crawl out of.

Visitor—Aren't you glad you are a little girl? Little Girl—No; I'd rather be a little boy. Visitor—But little boys generally have to wear their father's left-over clothes. Little Girl—Mother is a suffragette, and she says pretty soon it won't make much difference.

A little Bangor boy surprised both his parents and his school teacher not a little recently, while at dinner. He propounded the following scientific question to the teacher: "Which is the quickest, heat or cold?" The teacher was a little slow about venturing a reply, but finally said she thought heat was. "That is right," said the sharp youngster, "because you can catch a cold."

A FEW GOOD ITEMS

OLD MAN GOOD SHOT.

Although past the allotted threescore and ten limit, U. J. Albertson of Pekin, Ill., is still active as a Nimrod, and never goes duck hunting without getting the limit—fifteen ducks. Mr. Albertson, who was a former member of the lower house in congress, belongs to the Duck Island Gun Club, which has the distinction of having had for members Benjamin Harrison and Grover Cleveland. The limit of membership is sixty, and no new members are taken in except when there is a vacancy caused by death or resignation. Mr. Albertson has been an ardent duck hunter since 1860.

BROKEN NECK NO BAR.

William E. Steward, a former resident of River-ton, Ohio, is one of the few persons with broken necks who recovered. Mr. Steward was injured in Washington and for a year lay in a hospital, where he was treated for a broken vertebrae. He finally recovered so that he could be released from the hospital, but was obliged to wear a plaster cast about his neck, as the vertebrae would not hold his head up. After wearing the cast from six to nine months the neck became stronger and the support was discarded. Mr. Steward is now visiting Coos County, and, although his neck is still a little stiff, he is able to earn a living. He has been working on a drainage dredge in the Sutro basin in California.

CALIFORNIA'S GOLD.

The first gold in California was discovered seventy-one years ago, on January 24, 1848, by James Wilson Marshall. He was a native of New Jersey who had gone West and settled on the site of Sacramento. Blasting away some rocks to make a foundation for a building, he observed grains of what seemed to be gold scattered about in the excavated earth. A test revealed that it really was the precious metal. Wild excitement followed the discovery and the immortal rush of the "forty-niners" brought thousands of miners and adventurers to the Golden State. Marshall, the discoverer, did not profit by his find and would have spent his last days in poverty except for a small pension granted him by the State of California.

RECONSTRUCTION OF OLDEST CANAL.

The oldest canal in the world, dating back nearly 2,500 years, and also the longest canal, measuring in the main section nearly 1,000 miles, is that extending from Hanchow, south of Shanghai, China, to Peking. Most of this canal has been filled with mud by overflows of the Yellow River, but the southern portion of it still constitutes a very busy waterway.

The canal is now to be rebuilt and improved, says the Scientific American. The project is too vast to be done at a single operation and the funds are not at hand. At present about \$6,000,000 is available, and this sum will be used for the improvement of a section about 100 miles in length, leaving to a later date, when funds can be accumulated, the reconstruction of other sections. The work is to be undertaken by American engineers.

WOUNDED MEN IN NEW YORK.

A pathetic reminder that we have been engaged in the great war is Debarkation Hospital No. 3, in the busy shopping district on Sixth avenue, between Eighteenth and Nineteenth streets, New York City. In this large building groups of less seriously wounded men are allowed to sit comfortably at every window in the large building, both on the avenue and in the side streets. The men look longingly at the passing throngs of people, many perhaps in the hope that they may see some relative or friend. Numerous passers-by greet the wounded men by waving hands, the men returning the salutation. Relatives are allowed in the hospital at certain stated times. One reassuring fact that strikes those who pass the hospital is that the men inside are given the best possible care and everything possible is being done for them that medical science and kindly attention for their comfort can do. The wounded men at the windows look happy, despite their wounds.

TOY-MAKING IN JAPAN.

Four years ago the export of Japanese toys was limited to a few varieties, such as dolls, bamboo models and the like. A great change has taken place, says S. Kamiyama in the Japan Magazine. Last year the total value of toys exported from Japan amounted to \$4,200,000, and in 1918 will exceed \$5,000,000. Thus the "land of dolls and flowers," as Japan has been so charmingly called, has been transformed into a country creating playthings of every description for the children of foreign lands, as well as for its own.

One might have supposed that owing to the cheapness of labor in Japan it long ago would have become the largest source of supply for the toy trade, but until the shutting off of the German supply the toy-makers of Nippon never attempted seriously to enter foreign markets. Present increase in exportation is due wholly to efforts of government authorities to find markets for Japanese toys in foreign markets. And only a beginning has been made.

ITEMS OF GENERAL INTEREST

AIR DUEL OVER SEA.

The Paris police have taken a hand in the proposed aerial duel with machine guns between Leon Vaudecrane and Robert Schreeber, formerly army aviators. The police give two reasons why the duel should not be held. One is that duelling is forbidden and the other is that people below would be in danger. It is suggested, however, that the aviators might hold their duel over the sea.

CUB BEAR STARTLES TOWN

A cub bear about ten months old, caused much excitement when it walked into Moose Lake, Minn., and scratched at the back door of a restaurant. The cook thought it was the owner's dog. Her discovery that it was not began a series of activities in the kitchen which could have been equaled only by the bursting of a high explosive shell. When the cause of the disturbance was learned the men of the town formed an escort and drove the cub back to its haunts. Bears are protected by law and for that reason it was not killed.

WATERVLIET ARSENAL TO BE CANNON CENTER.

It has been officially announced at the Watervliet (N.

Y. arsenal that the plant would be the center of the cannon industry in the United States. The local gun factory is to be the master gauge of all the shops in the country, the sponsor of every gun manufactured, and its policies as directed by the chief of ordnance will be those of other plants in the United States. All patterns of guns are to be made at Watervliet and the organization of the arsenal is to be amended to accommodate the new demands made upon it.

DOG WORKS LIKE FARM-HAND.

Albert McClure, near Nevins Station, Ky., has a spotted coach dog that is a wonder and on which any granger would be willing to pay tax, even if it was several times what it is. All this season this dog has worked in the tobacco patch and did as much in worming the weed as any \$3.50-a-day hand. The dog takes his row like a hired hand and with his mouth attends to the pests. Should the worm be too high on the leaf for him to reach he seems to know that it would injure the plant for him to rear up on it, so he barks and one of the other workers responds and attends to the worm.

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Before and
After

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Before and
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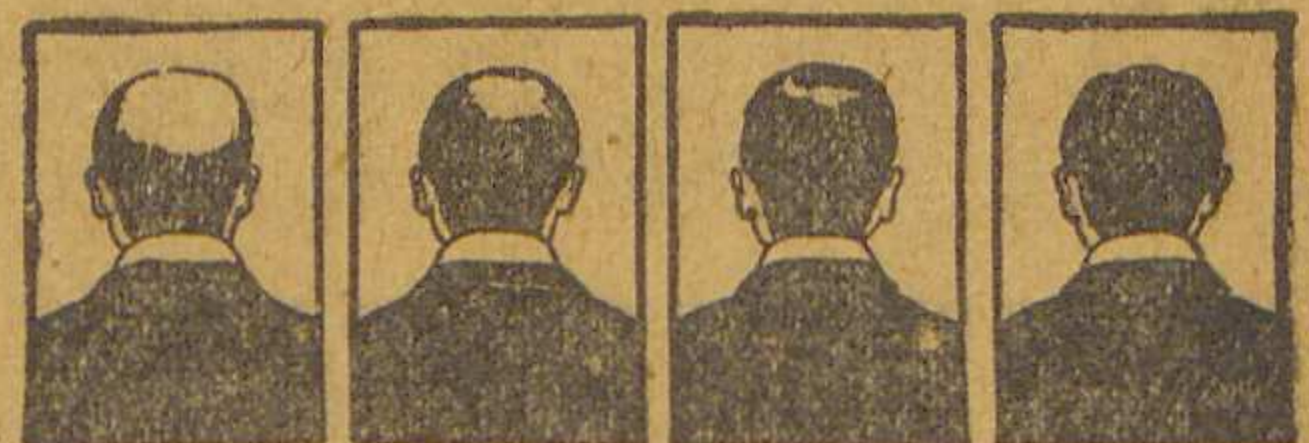
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